Local Accountability and Partnerships Panel

Final Report to the Minister of Learning
Honourable Andrew Thomson

May 31, 2005

Craig Melvin, Chair
Shirley Gange
Gary Shaddock

A Note of Appreciation

The Panel was assisted greatly by the staff of the Department of Learning. Wanda Biffart, South West Regional Director, provided an essential administrative link to the Department of Learning and the Restructuring Coordinating Committee. Ms. Biffart made sure our information needs were addressed and helped to test our ideas against provincial initiatives, polices and directions emerging from restructuring. Rhonda Grant, Research Officer, kept us organized, made many of the arrangements for meetings and consultations and, most importantly, summarized most of the feedback we received and that is included in our report. And Sherry Andrushuk, Office Manager, Education Equity Project, was our external contact person and provided administrative assistance in the early stages of our work. Robin Endsin, also with the Department of Learning, provided support and undertook the review of literature and research and compiled information about experiences in other provinces and countries. Robin also assisted with the consultations and helped to summarize the feedback and write the report. The support each of these individuals provided for the Panel was in addition to their ongoing responsibilities to the Department.

Bonnie Durnford, Deputy Minister of Learning; Gillian McCreary, Assistant Deputy Minister of Learning; Margaret Lipp, Assistant Deputy Minister of Learning; Edith Nagy, Acting Executive Director of Strategic Partnerships and Aboriginal Education Branch; and their Department colleagues shared essential information about provincial initiatives and cleared the path for the Panel's work.

The Minister of Learning, Honourable Andrew Thomson, was very supportive and met with the Panel several times to learn about our progress and to receive our report. Most importantly, the Minister made sure that we understood the Panel was constrained only by the criteria established to guide our work. He was also clear about the importance he attached to local accountability and partnerships.

And finally, as Chair, I am indebted to the other Panellists, Shirley Gange and Gary Shaddock, whose guidance, commitment and thoughtful consideration of the issues served us well at every stage of the project. Their experience, knowledge and dedication to Saskatchewan children and youth were our magnetic north.

Craig Melvin

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Executive Summary

The Local Accountability and Partnerships Panel was convened by the Minister in early January 2005 to create a framework for local accountability and community involvement through the development of advisory bodies at the school level. The Panel was asked to submit a framework to the Minister by May 31, 2005.

The work of the Panel in creating the framework was guided by criteria developed by the Restructuring Coordinating Committee[1]. These criteria served as the Panel's terms of reference throughout their deliberations.

Criteria

1. The framework will be developed to enhance the learning outcomes of all students.
2. The framework will support the learning program and supports for learning.
3. The accountability for the school division will rest with the Board of Education.
4. The framework will identify the communication and accountability relationship between the local structure and the Board of Education.
5. The framework will clarify the leadership and membership within a School^{PLUS} context, including teachers, school administrators, and identify procedures for engagement.
6. The framework will be flexible in order to address both urban and rural schools, and address local circumstances.

Process

Literature

The Panel also reviewed international, national and provincial literature related to parent/community involvement in schools. Findings of this review suggest that in many other countries in the world, governments are searching for more meaningful ways to involve parents and community members in schools. Here in Canada, legislation related to school advisory groups or councils is in place in all provinces. The following is a short summary of provincial legislation related to make up, purpose and responsibilities of school advisory groups across Canada.

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[1] The Restructuring Coordinating Committee (RCC) includes all of the provincial educational organizations and employee groups. Its responsibility is to provide school division restructuring advice to the Department of Learning.

Make up

While varying somewhat, in most provinces council make up includes parents of children attending the school, community members, the Principal of the school (usually ex officio), teacher representatives, and in the case of high schools – student representatives. In the Yukon Territories First Nations representation is also included. In all cases the legislation stipulates that parents and students become members through election and that other members of the council, such as teachers or community members may become members through election or appointment.

Purpose

In most cases the purpose of councils is to provide advice and direction to schools and Boards of Education.

Responsibilities

Councils are generally responsible for providing advice to schools and Boards. Specific responsibilities in this regard do differ somewhat across Canada; however, some common themes are repeated, including providing advice on the school improvement plan, the curriculum, student discipline, hiring practices regarding Principals, school policy, student support services, and parent/family/community-school relationships.

Consultations

The Panel also interviewed Saskatchewan experts and consulted educational organizations and other stakeholders. Public consultations held at seven provincial sites provided the Panel with grassroots insights regarding the current situation in communities and schools. A brief summary follows. A more complete summary is included in the Report.

In General

- Focus on students (children and youth);
- Flexibility is essential;
- Present structures work well in current context; and,
- Restructuring presents an opportunity.

Purpose

- Engage parents/community members in education process through grassroots networking and relationship building;
- Facilitate and enhance communication among school, Board, and the community;
- Provide an opportunity for the local voice of the community to be heard;
- Represent the unique cultural perspective of the community;
- Advocate for children, youth and community; and,
- Support the school.

Make up

- Individuals who are connected to the community and represent its diversity;
- Include the Principal;
- Elected positions for parents with children in the school and community members;
- Interagency human services on an ad hoc basis;
- Formal, advance nomination process;
- Only parents with students in the school should have a vote; and,
- Stagger the terms to build capacity and ensure organizational history and mentorship.

Relationships

- Focus must be on what is best for children and youth;
- Open and transparent regarding sharing of information and decision making;
- Must be mutual respect and trust;
- Must be guided by a Code of Conduct;
- Boards of Education should create a communication network; and,
- A clear framework for roles and responsibilities.

Responsibilities

- Advise the school on operations;
- Support the school;
- Enhance communication;
- Monitor the pulse of the community;
- Act as a sounding board and advise the Board of Education; and,
- Bring School^{PLUS} to the community level.

Supports

- Clearly written legislation that is logical and responsive to local needs;
- Budget;
- Training and professional development;
- Networking opportunities within the division;
- Formal communication network; and,
- Administrative time for Principals.

Vision

The Panel set the following statements of vision and direction to guide the formation of its recommendations.

The School Advisory Committee must be an integral, purposeful and valued component of school division governance.

The School Advisory Committee is:

- Created through an election process;
- Integrated into the Board of Education decision-making processes; and,
- Guided by common standards included in legislation. Boards of Education address flexibility through policy.

The School Advisory Committee must be inclusive of the community and representative of the students in the school.

The School Advisory Committee:

- Membership is representative of students in the school; and,
- Advisory positions are included to support the implementation of School^{PLUS};

The School Advisory Committee roles must be clear and well understood.

The School Advisory Committee:

- Encourages and facilitates parent and community engagement, developing shared responsibility for learning success and well-being of children and youth; and,
- Provides guidance and direction from a lay perspective to the school, the Board and community organizations and agencies.

The School Advisory Committee responsibilities must address key matters that make a difference in student learning and well-being.

The School Advisory Committee:

- Focuses its attention on the areas of the School Growth Plan where the parent/community perspective and efforts are most appropriate and needed; and,
- Monitors its activities to support continuous improvement in the areas of student learning and well-being.

The School Advisory Committee must align its work with provincial and division goals and initiatives.

The School Advisory Committee:

- Work aligns with the provincial overarching accountability framework and focuses on related division goals and initiatives; and,
- Work aligns with provincial and division learning and well-being outcomes for students.

The School Advisory Committee must be accountable, transparent and responsive in its relationship with parents and the school community.

The School Advisory Committee:

- Actively engages parents and community members in matters of concern related to public education;
- Reflects the nature of the community in which it is situated by collecting and sharing appropriate information with others; and,
- Regularly reports on its activities to parents, the school, and the community.

Recommendations

The Panel recommends that:

1.0 The purpose of School Advisory Committees be to encourage and facilitate parent and community engagement and develop shared responsibility for the learning success and well-being of all children and youth.

2.0 There be a School Advisory Committee established at each school, that the School Advisory Committee replace all other local governance entities established under the authority of the Province or School Divisions, and that provision be made for two or more School Advisory Committees to merge into a single School Advisory Committee but with the agreement of each involved School Advisory Committee.

3.0 The Board of Education of the school division, within the following parameters and in consultation with the School Advisory Committees of the division, determine:
    3.1 The number of members of each Advisory Committee;
    3.2 The composition of parent members that is representative of the student population;
    3.3 The procedures to nominate and elect the parent and community members of Advisory Committees; and,
    3.4 The procedures to select student representatives and for First Nations to name representatives to Advisory Committees.

4.0 School Advisory Committees be comprised of:
    4.1 Five to nine parent and community members, one or two secondary student members in schools offering 10, 20 or 30 level credits, and one or more First Nations representatives where students resident on-reserve are enrolled in the school, and that the majority of these members be parents of students enrolled in the school;
    4.2 The Principal or designate(s) reporting to the Principal of the school; and,
    4.3 Permanent advisory members approved by the Board of Education in consultation with the Advisory Committee.

5.0 The minimum procedure for the nomination and election of parent and community members of School Advisory Committees include:

  5.1 Naming of an employee of the Board of Education other than the Principal of the school as an Election Supervisor for the purpose of the nomination and election of the Advisory Committee;
  5.2 Public notice of the call for nominations or expressions of interest at least four weeks in advance of the date of their election; and,
  5.3 Election by secret ballot at an Annual General Meeting or other meeting of parents of students enrolled at the school and electors of the school division residing in the school attendance area called for the purpose of the election of parent and community members of the Advisory Committee.

6.0 The term of office of members of School Advisory Committees be two years with no limit on the number of consecutive terms that may be served.

7.0 One-half of the parent and community members of School Advisory Committees be elected each year.

8.0 The Chair, Vice Chair and Secretary of the School Advisory Committee be selected by and from among the parent, community, student and First Nations members.

9.0 Vacancies among parent and community member positions, in certain circumstances, be filled by Board of Education appointment in consultation with the School Advisory Committee.

10.0 Participation as a member of a School Advisory Committee be voluntary.

11.0 The Department of Learning, in consultation with Boards of Education, implement a transition plan for the formation and operation of Community School Councils to align with the establishment of School Advisory Committees as set out in these recommendations.

12.0 School Advisory Committees be established in legislation as an integral, purposeful and valued component of school division governance.

13.0 School Advisory Committees be responsible for developing and following a Code of Conduct that fosters positive, cooperative, student focused and forward-looking relationships among parents, the school and community.

14.0 Directors of Education and other senior school division administrators take leadership responsibility for implementation and successful operation of School Advisory Committees.

15.0 School Advisory Committees encourage and facilitate parent and community engagement and develop shared responsibility for the learning success and well-being of all children and youth by:

- 15.1 Understanding the school and its community's economic, social and health conditions and needs and their aspirations for child and youth learning and well-being and becoming knowledgeable about resources and supports for the school, parents and community;
- 15.2 Jointly and in cooperation with the Principal and staff of the school, develop and approve a School Growth Plan aligned with the school division strategic plan, for recommendation to the Board of Education;
- 15.3 Providing advice and approval on certain matters including:
  - 15.3.1 advice to the Board of Education to represent parents, students and community on policies, programs and educational service delivery decisions, including grade discontinuance, school closure, religious instruction, and language of instruction;
  - 15.3.2 advice to the school on its programs and operations;
  - 15.3.3 advice to other organizations, agencies and governments on the learning and well-being needs of children and youth; and,
  - 15.3.4 approval of fund-raising activities and school fees and the Student Code of Conduct.
- 15.4 Taking action to fulfil initiatives assigned it within the School Growth Plan;
- 15.5 Reporting annually to the parents and community on its plans, initiatives and outcomes and on the expenditure of funds related to the operation of the Advisory Committee; and,
- 15.6 Participating in opportunities to develop the capacity of the Advisory Committee to fulfil these responsibilities.

16.0 School Advisory Committees develop and submit for approval to the Board of Education a constitution that sets out:

   16.1 The Advisory Committee's structure and officers;
   16.2 The schedule of Advisory Committee meetings and means of public communication and consultation;
   16.3 The Advisory Committee's Code of Conduct;
   16.4 The processes that the Advisory Committee will use to make decisions; and,
   16.5 Procedures for addressing and resolving complaints and disputes that may arise from its internal functioning, parent and public communication and activities initiated and controlled by the Advisory Committee.

17.0 School Advisory Committees convene a minimum of five committee meetings and an annual meeting each year and that Board of Education policies provide for additional meetings, including provisions for parents of students enrolled in the school to call a special meeting of the School Advisory Committee to consider a matter of urgent interest concerning the learning or well-being of students in the school.

18.0 School Advisory Committees do not discuss, consider or provide advice about complaints or about personal, confidential information about students, parents, teachers and other staff of the school.

19.0 Boards of Education establish a senior administrative contact for each School Advisory Committee within the division to provide advice, support and communication assistance.

20.0 School Advisory Committees be provided with a budget allocation by Boards of Education to provide for their meeting, communication and related operating expenses.

21.0 Principals be provided with professional development, networking opportunities, administrative release time and clerical support commensurate with their additional responsibilities associated with the establishment and operation of School Advisory Committees.

22.0 Boards of Education provide for ongoing orientation, training, development and networking for School Advisory Committees.

23.0 Notwithstanding Recommendation 2.0, it is recommended further that Boards of Education, in 2006, be provided with the authority to establish School Advisory Committees for more than one school where existing local structures concur.

24.0 The Panel recommends that:
  24.1 Establishment and successful operation of School Advisory Committees be the responsibility of Boards of Education, including development of policies by January 31, 2006 necessary to support formation of School Advisory Committees;
  24.2 The Department of Learning include recognition of the costs of implementing and maintaining School Advisory Committees within the Foundation Operating Grant; and,
  24.3 The Department of Learning, in cooperation with the organizations represented on the Restructuring Coordinating Committee, fund and take leadership in developing:
    24.3.1 An implementation and operational handbook available online for School Advisory Committees and the staff of schools; and,
    24.3.2 In-service and training opportunities for Principals and members of School Advisory Committees.

25.0 The Department of Learning undertake a comprehensive evaluation of the establishment of School Advisory Committees in 2008 with a view to enhancing implementation, resolving any operational problems that may emerge, and planning further periodic reviews.

Introduction

The Panel

The Local Accountability and Partnerships Panel was convened by the Minister of Learning in early January 2005. The three Panel members, Craig Melvin, Shirley Gange and Gary Shaddock, were asked to create a framework for local accountability and community involvement through the development of advisory bodies at the school level. The Minister asked that the report be made to him by May 31, 2005.

Craig Melvin

Craig Melvin lives and works in Regina. He and his wife Ellen, who was a middle years teacher, retired in 2003. Craig taught at the beginning of his career but worked 26 years with the Saskatchewan School Boards Association where he was Executive Director from 1989 until his retirement. Ellen and Craig have two children and two grandchildren. Craig consults to provincial and local governments, management organizations and school boards and chairs the Board of Directors of the Saskatchewan Assessment Management Agency.

Gary Shaddock

Gary was born and raised on the family farm near Ponteix and after completion of high school, left for Alberta in search of a job. He spent the next 14 years in the finance/banking industry until returning to his roots to take over the family farm in 1984. Gary began his commitment to school board governance in 1985 as a trustee on the Ponteix School District Board of Trustees and became the sub-division representative on the Shaunavon Board of Education in 1988. His involvement continued as he held the position of President of the Saskatchewan School Boards Association from 1999 to 2001 and President of the Canadian School Boards Association from 2001 to 2003. Gary is still a trustee and continues to operate the family farm with his wife, Jackie. They have two grown children, Shay Ann, an engineer who practices in Regina and Mik, who works in the oil industry in Alberta.

Shirley Gange

Shirley Gange joined the Panel from her retirement home at Anglin Lake. Her 32-year career in education was enjoyed in its entirety in her hometown of Prince Albert. During her career she served as local

Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation (STF) president, councillor, teacher, principal, superintendent and director of education. A highlight was supporting three boards of education in the formation of the new Saskatchewan Rivers School Division in 1997. During this time her work focused on ensuring all partners, including staff, students, board members, parents and community members had opportunities to contribute to the success of the new school division. Shirley and her husband, Howard, who is a former teacher, continue to invest in the school division through five grandchildren who attend Saskatchewan Rivers schools.

The Restructuring Coordinating Committee (RCC) set the stage for the work of the Panel. The membership of the RCC includes:

- ***Canadian Union of Public Employees;***
- ***Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations;***
- ***League of Educational Administrators, Directors and Superintendents;***
- ***Saskatchewan Association of School Board Officials;***
- ***Saskatchewan Association of School Councils;***
- ***Saskatchewan School Boards Association;***
- ***Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation;***
- ***Service Employees International Union; and,***
- ***Department of Learning.***

Preamble

During the Panel's initial conversations about its task, it was quickly apparent that the members would need to gain a thorough understanding of the issues to be addressed. The Panel was interested in becoming better informed by pursuing formal avenues such as reviewing the literature on parent/community involvement in schools and reviewing documents that would provide them with an understanding of the Saskatchewan historical context of school level governance. We also knew it would be important to listen to what people involved at the grassroots level and experts in the field had to say. The perspectives of the key elementary-secondary educational organizations would also figure prominently as the issues were considered and recommendations were developed.

The Panel believes the review of the literature and research and their consultations and interviews provided them with a good understanding upon which to base their recommendations. We have attempted to write this report in a style that reflects the consultative manner in which the framework was developed.

Purpose

The Panel's purpose was to recommend a framework for how parents and communities might be meaningfully engaged in schools. Our work was guided by criteria developed by the Restructuring Coordinating Committee. This Committee includes all of the major provincial elementary and secondary educational organizations and employee groups. Its responsibility is to provide school division restructuring advice to the Department of Learning. The Committee believed that as school divisions were getting larger, it was important to look at community and school level accountability, partnerships and opportunities to participate in educational decision making. The Minister of Learning approved the criteria set out by the Committee and assigned the work program to the Panel. The criteria are discussed in the next section of this report concerning process.

Process

The Panel understood that the criteria were developed to set out the broad directions for designing a framework for local accountability and partnerships within the context of existing school level parent and community organizations. We were aware of many different parent and community involvement "structures" that exist at the school level in Saskatchewan. In rural school divisions there are District Boards of Trustees and in cities there are Local School Advisory Committees. Both of these entities are established in legislation. District Boards are elected formally under *The Local Government Elections Act* while Advisory Committees are elected less formally as set out in school board policy. Conseils d'écoles are elected for each school in the Division scolaire francophone in much the same way as District Boards of Trustees. District Boards, Advisory Committees and the Conseils have similar responsibilities set out in *The Education Act, 1995*. District Boards were first established in 1944 when the former rural, village and town districts were amalgamated into larger units of administration. Provision for the establishment of Advisory Committees came into place in 1978 when *The Education Act, 1995* was first written to combine a number of school and education related pieces of legislation into a single act. The Conseils d'écoles were established in 1998/1999 when the francophone component went through restructuring to form a single division for the province.

The Panel also recognized that our experience in Saskatchewan is that when existing structures do not suit a new situation, we invent something else, and educational governance is no exception. A number of school divisions, sometimes working with the province or First Nations, have created other parent and community involvement mechanisms at both the school and division level. Saskatoon, for example, has established a Citizen's Advisory Council to provide input at the "system" level while Meadow Lake School Division and Flying Dust First Nation have established a very creative partnership and governance relationship for five schools in the Town of Meadow Lake.

A further means for involvement was created as Community Schools were established to address the specific needs of schools with high proportions of First Nations and Métis students and families living in difficult socio-economic circumstances. Since 1980, when 11 pilot Community Schools were funded in six school divisions, the program has grown to include 98 schools in 31 school divisions. Each of these schools has a Community School Council that is responsible for the operation of the program, including the development of a school improvement plan. Although the Council is formed within the school division, it is not established under the Local School Advisory Committee legislation. In rural Community Schools, the Council in some circumstances operates along side of the District Board of Trustees for the attendance area.

Through the provincial School^{PLUS} School and Division Improvement Initiative parents and community members around the province are also involved in strengthening the educational capacity of schools and school divisions to implement and sustain School^{PLUS}. Parent and community member involvement in the initiative can be seen at the school level through membership in the School^{PLUS} Facilitation Team and at the school division level through membership in the Division-Community Facilitation Team.

In some schools parents and community members are also involved as members of the Health Education Liaison Committees (HELC). Part of the Comprehensive School Health Approach described in the *Middle Level Health Curriculum,* Health Education Liaison Committees are designed to provide support to the classroom and total school Health Education program, provide liaison with health-related programming in the community and/or health district, and provide a forum for discussion of parent/student/school health-related concerns.

School Councils and Home and School Associations are also formed at the school level as a means to engage parents and the community. These organizations develop their constitution and bylaws independently of the school division and provincial legislation and may exist in schools where other legislated bodies are in place. The focus of their involvement is less on formal school governance and improvement planning and more on coordinating parent and community supports for the school program and staff. The Saskatchewan Federation of Home and School Associations was established in 1938. Recently, the organization's name was changed to the Saskatchewan Association of School Councils (SASC).

The Panel understood that even with this great range of entities at the school level, a single framework was preferable. Keeping this provincial context in mind, the Panel considered its task in light of its understanding of the criteria. A brief summary of our thoughts about the criteria and about how they direct the Panel's consideration of the formation, operation, relationships and evaluation of a "local structure" follows.

Criteria

1. **The framework will be developed to enhance the learning outcomes of all students.**

The Department of Learning and school divisions, within a comprehensive accountability program, identify key indicators of student growth and achievement. The success of "local structures" will be gauged against these indicators. It is the Panel's view that engaging parents and the community, sharing responsibility and encouraging full involvement in school initiatives is healthy and positive but we should not substitute the process of involvement for the outcome of improved student learning as the measure of success.

2. **The framework will support the learning program and supports for learning.**

The Panel understands that the focus of the work and energy of the "local structures" will be on both the curriculum and supports students require to be successful in their learning. This parallels the dual focus of the province and school divisions inherent in School^{PLUS}. This also directs attention to matters that are known to impact significantly and fairly directly on student success.

3. **The accountability for the school division will rest with the Board of Education.**

The Panel understands that the responsibility for education is shared between the Province and Boards of Education. The Province provides broad guidelines and expectations within legislation and provincial policy. Within this framework, Boards of Education set out policies, regulations and procedures to fulfil their and the Province's expectations. Parent and community involvement mechanisms exist within school divisions and are established within the policies and responsibilities of Boards of Education.

4. **The framework will identify the communication and accountability relationship between the local structure and the Board of Education.**

The Panel is directed to consider how responsibilities for the formation, maintenance and support of the "local structure" might be assigned. The Panel will also need to consider how they and Boards of Education are expected to communicate, and about what. As well, the accountability of the "local structure" would need to be considered.

5. **The framework will clarify the leadership and membership within a School^{PLUS} context, including teachers, school administrators, and identify procedures for engagement.**

The Panel is directed here to recommend who would provide leadership, who should be a part of the "local structure" and how they might be elected, chosen or appointed. The Panel is reminded that agencies and organizations that support School^{PLUS} initiatives should be considered for participation. How they are expected to relate and work together will need to be explored.

6. **The framework will be flexible in order to address both urban and rural schools, and address local circumstances.**

The great variation among communities and schools, their expectations and the needs of students and families requires that a good deal of flexibility be allowed within the framework. This leads the Panel to consider what will not be flexible, how flexibility should be exercised, in what circumstances, and by whom at the local level.

Format of the Report

The first section of this report provides a brief cross-Canada literature review as well as a consideration of the documented Saskatchewan historical experience with school level governance. An Annotated Bibliography describing literature related to parent and community involvement in schools is included in the appendix of this report.

The Panel also organized seven regional consultations across the province. These consultations provided the Panel with grassroots insights regarding the current types and amount of parent and community engagement in schools. The second section of the report includes a summary of what was heard during the consultation process.

The third section contains the Panel's recommendations and commentary outlining the Panel's thinking related to the recommendations. This thinking was guided by the findings of the literature review, understandings developed during the regional consultations and consultations with representatives of educational organizations, as well as by insights revealed during interviews with Saskatchewan experts.

The fourth and final section of the report describes the Panel's suggestions for the transition process and ideas regarding implementation.

Terms:

The term **"parent"** is used to refer to a child's significant care-giver. This may include a child's mother, father, grandparent, uncle, aunt, sister, brother, foster parent or other guardian. At times we use the terms "parent" and "family" interchangeably. The term **"family"** can be defined as any combination of two or more persons bound together by ties of mutual consent, birth, and/or adoption/placement and who, together, assume responsibility for variant combinations of some of the following: physical maintenance and care of group members; production, consumption and distribution of goods and services; and affective nurturing.

The Panel used the term **"Advisory Authority"** in its consultations as a general term to refer to the "local structure" or advisory body at the school level. However, in our report we use the term **"School Advisory Committee"** as this is the term the Panel has recommended.

Section One – Literature Review: Parent and Community Involvement in Schools

Cross-Canada Context

Over the course of the past 25 years, all Canadian provinces have made an effort to develop processes and mechanisms to encourage greater parent/community involvement in schools. Evidence of this can be seen in the many changes to provincial legislation regarding "local structures" as well as in the proliferation of provincial policy documents, manuals and directives in this area. In the following discussion, provincial initiatives regarding "local structures", often referred to as school advisory councils, are discussed in the categories of purpose and responsibilities, make up, relationships and supports. The appendices include a description of the major elements province by province.

... policy needs to go beyond whether parents are involved; it needs to focus on how they are involved and what happens as a result."

Pelletier J. & Corter C. 2004, p. 8

Purpose and Responsibilities

In the past ten years, changes in Canadian provincial legislation regarding the nature of school councils have led to the creation of bodies that have expanded upon the advisory role and membership of the traditional Parent-Teacher Association (PTA). The purpose of school advisory councils as defined in much of the current provincial legislation is to provide advice and direction regarding curriculum (including local options), student discipline, hiring practices, school policy (especially as related to increasing student achievement), student support services, and parent/family/community-school relationships. The mandate of some school councils (such as the School Planning Councils in British Columbia and Governing Boards in Quebec) is explicitly directed towards taking part in developing and monitoring school improvement plans. The traditional form of parental involvement in schools through parent-teacher association membership is also in evidence in many provinces. The role of these groups appears to be to provide volunteer support in the classroom, engage in school fund-raising activities, and advise the school on matters such as student behaviour.

Make up

Although the membership of school advisory councils as defined in provincial legislation does vary, in most cases it includes parents of children attending the school, community members living in the neighbourhood of the school, the school Principal, teacher representatives and, for high schools, student representatives. Some provinces also suggest members of the larger community, such as representatives of business, arts or cultural communities should be included. In the Yukon Territories, First Nations members are guaranteed representation on the school council. The advisory council is usually an elected body of from five to 20 individuals, the majority of whom are parents. Community members and teachers are often appointed or elected.

Relationships

The relationships between school advisory councils, school staff, boards, and the larger school community, and the responsibilities of each of these groups within the relationship are less clearly defined in legislation. A more detailed picture of how provinces are addressing concerns surrounding relationships emerges when changes in legislation, supporting documents and literature related to changes are considered together. Following changes in legislation relating to school councils, the governments of Nova Scotia, Alberta and British Columbia undertook reviews to determine progress made as these bodies attempted to fulfil their mandates. Several common themes can be seen in these reviews and recent literature related to issues surrounding relationships.

Principals

In many cases, Principals appear to be key players in the successful development of school councils. There is evidence that clearly defining the authority of the council from the onset encourages the development of a positive relationship between the Principal and the council (Alberta Learning, 2004; Society for the Advancement of Excellence in Education, 2004; Province of Nova Scotia, 2003; Raham, 2002; Wagner, 2004; McKenna & Willms, 1998). Some suggest that in order to support the relationship with the school council, Principals may need training to understand the mentoring/coaching aspect of their role as well as current and appropriate resources (Alberta Learning, 2004). One independent study suggests that Principals who are more transformational in their leadership approach and more open to change are better able to support the development of school councils (Devereaux, 1995).

Teaching Staff

Relationships between teaching staff and school councils receive less attention in provincial reviews. Research literature in this area suggests that teaching staff is not enthusiastic about more parent/community involvement in the area of school decision making (McKenna & Willms, 1998). Their main concerns appear to be associated with parent/community members' lack of knowledge regarding educational research and lack of broad professional experience (McKenna & Willms, 1998; Hoover-Dempsey, Walker, Jones & Reed, 2002). Obstacles related to parental/community involvement include personal and emotional barriers, such as teachers' past experiences with parent/community member confrontation (including attacks on their professional judgement), and organizational barriers, such as parental meddling and impingement on professional authority (Lasky & Moore, 2001). Increasing parental/community members' understanding and knowledge base regarding current issues in education and clarifying the responsibilities (including providing more definition regarding parent and community members areas of authority) may provide such relationships with the support they require (Hoover-Dempsey, Walker, Jones & Reed, 2002; Lasky & Moore, 2001; McKenna & Willms,1998).

Division (District) Boards

Issues related to relationships between school advisory councils and Boards of Education are highlighted in several provincial reviews. In British Columbia, Alberta and Nova Scotia reviews, school council members suggested Boards could do more to support and facilitate communication between councils and Boards. In an Alberta review, council members explained that they appreciated Boards that provided specific information regarding how councils could be most effective in carrying out their mandate. They also appreciated Boards that asked "strategic and purposeful questions to elicit insights and gather advice" and that provided information regarding such questions "in a form that councils can understand and digest" (Alberta Learning, 2004, p5). In British Columbia, where School Planning Councils (SPCs) are specifically mandated to engage in the school planning process, council members suggested their relationship with Boards was too distant. While the British Columbia *School Act* requires Boards to consult with SPCs, participants in the review suggest regular consultation was not taking place (Society for the Advancement of Excellence in Education, 2004). In Nova Scotia, participants in a school advisory council consultation also suggested the relationship of school advisory councils and Boards was somewhat problematic. Council members participating in the review suggested that more attention needs to be paid to building better relationships and improving communication between councils and Boards (Province of Nova Scotia, 2003).

Supports

All provincial reviews accent the importance of encouraging community support of school advisory councils, especially attending to issues related to reaching out to the broader school community to seek input on matters of significance to the school and the community. Many participants in provincial reviews suggest that more attention needs to be paid to finding ways to communicate the importance and the potential of councils (Alberta Learning, 2004; Province of Nova Scotia, 2003; Society for Advancement of Excellence in Education, 2004).

Provincial reviews and research also suggest that school advisory councils require support in a number of other areas, many of which have been touched on already. If council members are to become more deeply involved in a meaningful advisory capacity, they will need to be provided with opportunities to become more knowledgeable regarding education issues (Alberta Learning, 2004; Province of Nova Scotia, 2003; Society for Advancement of Excellence in Education, 2004, McKenna & Willms, 1998). Some suggest that council members also need to be provided with training and in-service opportunities in the area of data gathering and analysis (Society for the Advancement of Excellence in Education, 2004). Boards can support school councils by setting clear policies regarding their expected roles and responsibilities within the particular context they find themselves (Alberta Learning, 2004, Province of Nova Scotia, 2003). Provincial governments can provide financial support by contributing monies to training and the development of manuals and other tools that help councils fulfil their mandate.

"The first school house in our area was built by the neighbourhood men. They just got together and built it. I think my Grampa Dean was the instigator. He had two grandchildren and he wanted a place for them to go to school."

A Saskatchewan mother, grandmother and teacher who attended, and taught in a one room schoolhouse

"An increase of enrolment and attendance saw the demise of the one room school house by introducing the need for larger schools. Some factors which increased school population were the introduction of the 1945 family allowance which improved student attendance, increased public transportation, larger units of school administration and post-war immigration."

Saskatchewan One Room School Project

http://www.rootsweb.com/~cansk/school/about.html

Saskatchewan Historical Experience with School Level Governance

As the two quotes on the right suggest, documents describing Saskatchewan's history in the area of parent/community involvement in schools reflect the sense of initiative that is so typical of prairie people – our sense of shared responsibility and the adaptations we have made because of a changing demographic landscape. The following time-line provides a brief look at how our experience with school level parent and community involvement has played itself out in the past 100 years of Saskatchewan's existence as a province.

1905

Eight hundred ninety-six school districts (most of them composed of a one room schoolhouse) provide for the educational needs of approximately 25,000 students with an annual attendance rate of approximately 53 per cent.

1944

The government of the day addresses demographic changes ('one school' school districts) by passing the *Larger School Units Act*. "Small school districts within a school division (are) not disestablished, but most of the powers of district boards of trustees (are) transferred to the larger "units" of administration" (School Councils: The Saskatchewan Vision, SSTA Research Centre Report #96-13).

1978

The Education Act establishes the present form of governance. District Boards of Trustees are instituted for rural attendance areas and the unit board becomes the division board. Duties of District Board Trustees are outlined in legislation and the *Act* provides that the Board of Education may delegate duties to the District Board. This legislated framework addresses parent and community involvement in schools by providing for a District Board of Trustees in rural areas and Local School Advisory Committees in urban areas. However, these two bodies differ in the manner in which they are chosen and in their responsibilities (District Board of Trustees being formally elected and having more direct involvement in school governance).

1991

The *Finance and Governance Review* proposes changes for District Boards of Trustees to accompany significant school division amalgamation and financial restructuring. The proposals receive little support in rural Saskatchewan and the changes to District Boards do not proceed. The reasons for the proposed school level changes are similar to the reasons for the Panel's present work.

1996

A discussion paper, *Structuring Public Education for the New Century: Ensuring Quality Education for Saskatchewan Students*, is released by the then Department of Education requesting public input on the structure of the education system in Saskatchewan. In the report summarizing response to public discussions that took place related to the structure of the education system, *Structuring Public Education for the New Century: Summary of Public Discussions and Plans for the Future*, the government of the day announces a plan of action "balancing government leadership with local determination". Proposed changes in the structure for school level parent and community involvement do not go forward.

The Saskatchewan School Trustees Association publishes two documents reporting the results of public consultations related to public/community involvement in schools. These two documents, *School Councils: The Saskatchewan Vision* and *New Directions for School Level Governance*, outline issues related to school councils and provide recommendations regarding the purpose, responsibilities, membership, implementation and supports for such bodies. No provincial action is taken on the basis of the reports.

1997

The government requests public input into processes that might encourage parent and community involvement in schools, with particular attention to how school community councils might serve as avenues for involvement. A summary of the findings of this consultation, ***Involving Parents and Community in Schools: Report and Future Plans*** is published in the spring of 1999.

1998

In the spring of 1998, amendments are made to existing legislation to facilitate the amalgamation of the nine Conseils scolaires into one provincial board (Conseil scolaire fransaskois). Full amalgamation takes effect on January 1, 1999. The present Conseils d'écoles fransaskois are organized to provide a school level avenue for parent and community involvement. The structure, its formation and responsibilities are established to conform to francophone educational rights arising from the *Charter of Rights and Freedoms* and along the lines of District Boards of Trustees, although their formation is included in *The Education Act, 1995* rather than *The Local Government Election Act*.

1999

The Role of the School Task Force (composed of a broad cross section of representatives of the education community, parents, the human service providers, the Aboriginal community and other sectors of society) is struck. The Task Force requests public input on education in the context of a changing society. During the first phase they engage in an extensive consultation and information gathering process. An interim report is published in 2000.

2001

The Role of the School Task Force solicits feedback on their interim findings through a variety of means. Their final report, *School^{PLUS}: A Vision for Children and Youth* is published. The report encourages all schools to become Community Schools especially because, in the view of the Task Force, these schools were providing for substantially improved parent and community involvement.

2004

An Education Equity Initiative is announced to renew the province's system of education to restore sustainability and equity for students and education ratepayers. One phase of this initiative calls for the establishment of a three-member Education Equity Task Force to recommend new school division boundaries. The Minister approves the Education Equity Task Force's map of recommended school division boundaries on November 12, 2004. The Restructuring Coordinating Committee (RCC) is re-established to provide support for the restructuring school divisions and a forum and a resource to help resolve amalgamation related issues.

2005

A Local Accountability and Partnerships Panel is convened and requested to create a framework for local accountability and community involvement through the development of advisory bodies at the school level. The RCC provides the Panel with six criteria to guide their deliberations.

Section Two – Consultation Summary

The Panel was particularly interested in hearing from those at the grassroots level about the many different structures for parent and community involvement that are currently in existence. We were also interested in drawing from the wisdom and experiences of those who work within them, in both rural and urban settings.

People want to know that they are heard and that they have a say in their children's education.

The Panel prepared for the consultations by developing a number of critical questions to guide the discussions. These questions were directed at addressing five essential features of the School Advisory Committee: its purpose, possible make up, accountability relationships, responsibilities and the supports it would require to function effectively.

There was overwhelming consensus that "one size fits all" will not honour the diversity in the province and that flexibility to respond to local issues and needs is a must.

The Panel relied on the consultations to hear the local and unique concerns in rural, urban and northern communities across the province. We also welcomed written submissions from anyone interested in expressing their opinions and posted the consultation guide on the Saskatchewan Learning website for easy access.

Regional consultations were held throughout March and early April in the Saskatchewan Learning regional office centres of Saskatoon, North Battleford, Melfort, Swift Current, Weyburn, Regina, and La Ronge.

Sessions generally ran three hours and began with an overview presentation. The remainder of the session was divided into two parts. Initially, mixed groups[2] were asked to consider the critical questions and report back. Participants were then asked to move into "role alike" groups and consider the same questions but with a focus on their particular role.

What follows is a summary of what the Panel heard during the regional consultations. It begins with a general description and then turns to a summary of responses made to the specific critical questions.

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[2] Participants in most our sessions were seated around tables in groups of approximately ten. During the first part of the meeting, participants were encouraged to sit with people they did not know. During this first part of the meeting, tables were comprised of an assortment of parents, teachers, Principals, trustees, division board members, students and administrators.

In General

The Panel heard that the focus of any new structure must place meeting the needs of students as its primary goal. Student success and well-being must be at the centre of all planning and decision making. We were reminded time and time again through the consultations that every school and every community in Saskatchewan is unique, and that any framework that is developed must be flexible enough to both reflect and respect this uniqueness.

Many people who attended the regional consultations felt that the structures and processes they have in place work well, whether they be district boards of trustees, community school councils, parent councils or home and school associations.

Responses to Specific Questions

A summary of the mixed group responses is titled, "Mixed Group". The summary of the role alike responses is titled "Role Alike Groups".

Purpose

What are the primary reasons for creating School Advisory Committees?

Mixed Groups

Engaging parents and community in schools was seen as one of the fundamental reasons for establishing School Advisory Committees. Many participants recognized the need for an entity to advocate for children and youth and the community. School Advisory Committees were seen as a means to facilitate communications processes acting as liaison among school, community and Boards of Education. It was also suggested that enhanced communications processes would serve to ensure that the voices and needs of the community are heard and considered in decision-making and planning processes.

Some saw the establishment of School Advisory Committees as an opportunity to build on existing structures to create a new generation of enhanced parent, student and community involvement in schools. Such involvement would work to support the learning environment and improve learning outcomes though new partnerships and application of the School^{PLUS} Effective Practices Framework. Others, particularly

District Board Trustees, suggested that what they are doing now is working in their community and they see no value in changing.

Enhancing parent involvement in their children's education was a commonly heard theme in all the regional meetings. Much of the discussion in this area was focused on traditional home and school activities, such as coordinating volunteer efforts, and special events. Others connected the work of School Advisory Committees to enhancing the quality of education and improving learning outcomes. This is where the Panel most often heard about School^{PLUS} and the implementation of the School^{PLUS} Effective Practices Framework. Many said that School Advisory Committees could be the conduit to bring School^{PLUS} to the community level.

The Panel heard mixed opinions on fund-raising. Some, particularly traditional parent councils and home and school organizations, saw fund-raising as a function and responsibility of School Advisory Committees. Others did not see it as a function of the Committee, but rather envisioned a sub-group or separate group altogether holding this responsibility. Still others raised the issue of the appropriateness of fund-raising in schools at all. They pointed out that the differing economic contexts within which schools are located can create inequities.

The importance of ensuring effective communication mechanisms and processes among school, administration, Board of Education, family and community was also strongly voiced. Participants wanted transparency in communications and decision-making processes. They saw School Advisory Committees as a focal point for communication and dissemination of information. We heard that many existing structures such as District Boards, Community School Councils and Parent Councils follow these practices now in the scope of their current roles and responsibilities.

Many participants were also concerned that the needs and priorities of individual schools continue to be heard at the division level. Some suggested that one of the purposes of School Advisory Committees should be to ensure that the concerns of individual schools are heard and acted upon at the Board level. Some also thought School Advisory Committees should be advocates for the local school and accountable to the Board of Education and to the school.

Others referred to current initiatives related to School^{PLUS} and suggested part of the purpose of School Advisory Committees should be to help build supportive partnerships with community groups and agencies, as well as businesses. Many provided examples of initiatives that are currently underway and stressed the importance of maintaining current partnerships.

Role Alike Groups

Students

Students thought that an important purpose of School Advisory Committees should be to ensure that all involved in education, students, staff, parents, and members of the community, have a place where their voices can be heard and their ideas acted upon. They suggested that if this became one of the purposes of the Committees, issues that are important to everyone could be addressed and everyone would be better informed regarding what was "going on" in schools.

Following up on this purpose, students described several benefits of involving both students and community members. They noted that by involving students, others would be provided with a more accurate picture of what is important to students. Student involvement would also help students feel that they are more responsible for their education and have more control over it. This would lead to students becoming more involved in their own education and more committed to their educational futures. Students suggested that community members also needed to be provided with an opportunity to voice their concerns. They thought that if this were to occur, community members would feel more comfortable about getting involved in schools. This would in turn create a positive environment in the school because local culture would be reflected there and students would be able to talk with community members about a variety of educative paths and learn more about opportunities they might want to pursue.

Teachers and Support Staff

Teachers and support staff saw School Advisory Committees as a body that had the potential to provide all with an opportunity to speak out for education. These Advisory Committees could be a forum where community members, teachers, parents and support staff could offer their perspective on education.

Teachers and support staff also saw School Advisory Committees supporting the school in a number of ways. School Advisory Committees could become involved in creating communication networks within the community. They could provide a common place for organizations to discuss educational concerns. Through their involvement in the community they could create a more informed public by explaining what is happening at the school, including problems schools are dealing with and ideas for improvement.

Teachers and support staff also suggested that School Advisory Committees could provide parents with an opportunity to become "authentically involved rather than just helping at hot dog days". They suggested that by getting parents more involved, parents would begin to understand what goes on at school and become more supportive of education in general.

District Board Trustees

School Advisory Committees could be charged with listening to the "heartbeat of the community."

District Board Trustees suggested that one of the most important purposes of School Advisory Committees should be to ensure that the democratic process of allowing ratepayers to be represented in education of children and youth be continued. They were especially concerned that as school divisions expanded without such a structure at the school level, the voice of local ratepayers, whose role was to hold Division Boards accountable for their decisions related to individual schools, would be lost. In their role as representatives of the local community, District Trustees saw School Advisory Committees taking part in the hiring of teachers and support staff, making decisions regarding school facility operations, monitoring the school budget and enhancing the learning environment.

District Board Trustees thought that members of School Advisory Committees could also be charged with listening to the "heartbeat of the community" and providing valuable feedback to the school division regarding local culture and concerns. Through the involvement of community members and parents, descriptions of local successes and concerns could be communicated to schools and school divisions and given the value they deserved. Perhaps even a certain degree of local autonomy could be preserved. Acting as a liaison connecting the school community to the Division Board, School Advisory Committees could facilitate communication and ensure that it took place in a transparent manner.

Parents

Parents thought that the purpose of School Advisory Committees should be to provide an opportunity for the voice of students, parents and the community to be heard at the school and Board level. The presence of School Advisory Committees at the school level would provide students, parents and community members with a more formal means of providing input into the education of children and youth. By acting as liaisons between the school and the Board, School Advisory Committees would also provide the school and the division with valuable information related to the diversity that exists within individual school communities.

Parents also saw School Advisory Committees becoming advocates for children by advising the school and the Board regarding needs of children in their school. In this way, they saw the Advisory Committees contributing to a positive educational environment.

Division Board Members

Division Board Members' comments suggest that they considered the purpose of School Advisory Committees within the context of a Committee's place in the school division as a whole. They saw School Advisory Committees "taking the pulse of the local community" and providing schools and school divisions with an understanding of the local culture. If their membership was representative of the school community in which they were situated, they could provide a genuine grassroots perspective to schools and Boards. By using the Effective Practices framework as a focus for their work and by working within the School^{PLUS} philosophy, School Advisory Committees could provide parents and community members with an opportunity to become involved in meaningful work that advanced the goals of the school and the division.

Division Board Members believed that School Advisory Committees should be representative groups that were "more cooperative than political". Their role was to encourage communication between school and community and Division Board. They could accomplish this by ensuring that the issues and concerns of every school community were heard at the school and Board level and keeping their local communities informed regarding school and Board initiatives.

Community School Personnel

Community school personnel suggested that the purpose of School Advisory Committees should be to engage parents and community in the school and community and offer parents, community members, school staff and administration, students and agency representatives an opportunity to be heard in a formal manner. They believed that School Advisory Committees should empower parents to play a larger role in the community and instil pride in the community. School Advisory Committees should also give the school input on what issues are important to the community, as well as suggest where changes need to be made and where things are working well. In this way, Advisory Committees could support and even direct program development.

Community School personnel suggested that the Community School philosophy, which is focused on developing relationships with community members, should be expanded to all schools within the province with appropriate financial considerations. The design of existing Community School Councils should be used for School Advisory Committees. A School Advisory Committee should be located at every school.

Senior Division Administrators

Administrators suggested that one of the most important reasons for the creation of a School Advisory Committee would be to support student learning by engaging parents and community members in the education of children. Members of the School Advisory Committee could work with others in defining the school vision and help make that vision a reality by becoming school/community leaders and by engaging parents and community members in activities related to the vision. It would also be the purpose of the School Advisory Committee to become informed about the school improvement plan and the Effective Practices framework and share current understandings and initiatives with parents and other community members.

Administrators saw School Advisory Committees providing schools and Division Boards with information regarding the culture and values of the local community. School Advisory Committees could also provide parents and local community members with an opportunity to voice their concerns and become involved in problem solving. They could support two-way communication between the division and the school by describing local concerns and suggestions/opportunities related to student learning and well-being to the school and Board. After being provided with explanations by the Board, they could then explain to the local community how those concerns and suggestions/opportunities had informed school and Board decisions. In this way, school and Board accountability would be supported.

Administrators suggested that if School Advisory Committees were created with these purposes in mind, they would present all school divisions (not just those undergoing amalgamation) with a positive opportunity for change.

Principals

Principals suggested that the purpose of School Advisory Committees should be to enhance student learning, always keeping the best interests of students at heart. With this purpose in mind, they saw members of School Advisory Committees participating in activities that engage parents in their children's learning. They also saw the Advisory Committees encouraging parents and community members to become involved in problem solving around issues related to student learning. Committees could work with School^{PLUS} partners to support student learning and advise schools and divisions regarding local issues and concerns.

Principals thought that School Advisory Committees could provide schools and school divisions with an opportunity to keep in touch with local needs and understand the nature of local culture. They could serve as a sounding board for policies and provide feedback regarding the effectiveness of policies. In this way, they could help fill the gap left by District Boards of Trustees.

Make up

What members of the community and school would you see as being part of the School Advisory Committees?

Mixed Groups

Participants in the consultations were quite concerned that the make up of School Advisory Committees be inclusive. They thought school level representation should include parents, students, community members, the Principal or coordinator, as well as teacher(s), and support staff. They believed parents should hold the majority of positions to represent the best interests of their children and their community.

Without exception, the Principal was seen as a vital member of the School Advisory Committee. There were some who thought that the Principal should be eligible to vote and others who felt strongly that giving Principals a vote could place them, at times, in awkward situations or conflicts of interest. Principals themselves did not voice a strong desire to have a vote, but they did recognize that their role would be significant.

There were also many who saw a real value in having teachers as members. However, there were others who disagreed. Many District Board Trustees that currently play a role in hiring and other decision-making processes that directly impact teachers felt that there was too great a possibility for conflict or conflict of interest for teachers to become members. Additionally, some questions were raised related to whether time spent on the School Advisory Committees would be considered as an extra-curricular activity for teachers.

While groups in every session did recognize the value that interagency and interdepartmental representatives could add to a School Advisory Committee in terms of knowledge and networking, it was also recognized that the capacity within departments and agencies to have such representation does not exist in all areas of the province. Participants were very comfortable with bringing in representatives on an ad hoc basis, provided the connection to the community was in place.

Including students within the membership of a School Advisory Committee was seen as important and students reinforced this. Some concerns were raised as to whether it would be appropriate for students to be privy to and involved in some of the types of discussions and decisions anticipated to occur. However, students suggested strongly that including students as members would provide a perspective that others could not supply.

"As a student I think that we as a student body should have a voice on a local board. After all we know what is best for us regarding learning and what we need to make the best out of the education we are offered."

Generally, participants were in favour of elected positions representative of the school student population. They suggested a formal nomination process. Only parents/guardians with a student in the school would be eligible to vote. Terms should be staggered so that new members would have an opportunity to learn from more seasoned members. Members of the community at large should be invited to attend meetings.

How should they be selected?

While the Panel chose the word "select" as a neutral term, it was not interpreted that way by many who went through the guide. "Select" was intended to describe the range of choices for membership from election to appointment. However, the Panel found that they had to clarify this at nearly every meeting.

... people valued the election process and saw a direct relationship between being elected and being accountable and were cautious about considering appointments.

For the most part, people valued the election process and saw a direct relationship between being elected and being accountable and were cautious about considering appointments. A major concern about appointments was that those involved in the School Advisory Committee, be they parents or non-parents, should have a legitimate connection to the community and be accountable to it.

District Board Trustees supported maintaining their formal election process while others were comfortable with a more informal process. Those from Community Schools liked their model by which an executive is elected through a nomination process, but everyone who participates is a member and is thereby accountable. They reported the success Community Schools have had using this model and urged the Panel to consider adopting it.

Role Alike Groups

Students

Students suggested that anyone involved in the school should be eligible for membership on the School Advisory Committee with the proviso that the membership should be representative of the student body. Students included the Principal, teachers, parents, Elders, students and community members as well as interagency representatives and First Nations representatives in their described make up.

They suggested that all positions should be volunteer positions and elections should be held to determine who would hold these positions. Including more than one student would also be a good idea so that an accurate point of view regarding the student perspective could be presented and so that the student would feel comfortable presenting that perspective. Members of the community should be involved to reinforce the School^{PLUS} philosophy that suggests “learning is about more than just books”.

.. "anyone willing to improve the life of a student."

Teachers and Support Staff

Teachers and Support Staff thought that the membership of a School Advisory Committee should be open to all or as one group described it, “anyone willing to improve the life of a student.” They saw students, teachers, the Principal, community members, parents, health, justice and social service workers becoming involved in School Advisory

Committees. They did suggest, however, that a size restriction be placed on the School Advisory Committee executive. Teachers and Support Staff believed that the community should determine how selection of members of the School Advisory Committee should take place. They cautioned that School Advisory Committees should be wary of becoming "driven by the school administrator" and suggested that it might be a good idea to consider paying an individual to organize the Committee.

District Board Trustees

Trustees suggested that the make up of a School Advisory Committee should consist largely of parents of students attending the school and electors living in the area of the school. They thought the core group of the School Advisory Committee should be elected with an open invitation to other community members to become involved. The exact selection process should be decided by the local community. Some suggested that the structure should be similar to the current District Board structure (elected members with voting rights and appointed members such as students, business community members, seniors and clergy, who do not have voting rights). Staggering elections to preserve continuity was also advised.

Parents

Parents saw themselves, students, electors and community experts as important members of the School Advisory Committee. They suggested that students and the in-school administrator should be appointed members and all others elected members. They believed that it was important to keep the size of the "working" School Advisory Committee "small" so that it could accomplish its goals but that general meetings should be open to all. Terms of office should be limited to encourage new members, and staggered to maintain continuity.

Division Board Members

Division Board Members suggested that membership of the School Advisory Committee should be composed of volunteers and be open to all whose primary concern is the school. The Committee should include a "good cross section of the community". The Principal of the school should attend meetings but should have no voting rights. Interagency personnel and other community members should be invited to provide advice as needed. Board Members should attend as many meetings as is feasible.

The selection process should be flexible, allowing for the unique needs and desires of the community. However, in order for the Committee to operate effectively, there should be a size limit. Some Board Members favoured an elected executive. Many suggested that there should be rotating terms of office and a limit to the number of years any one member could stay in office.

Community School Personnel

Community School personnel suggested that everyone "who has a stake in the community" should be invited to become a member of the School Advisory Committee. To encourage membership, the school mission and model should be circulated. While meetings should be open to all, there should be an elected executive to ensure leadership. The structure the Panel designs should be flexible enough to accommodate the different needs of each community. Board Members should attend meetings or have some other direct tie to the School Advisory Committee so that "issues brought to light by the community are not simply disregarded or ignored".

Senior Division Administrators

Administrators suggested that the make up of an Advisory Committee should be "kept flexible" and allow for the "fluidity" of local circumstances. While the local community and the Division Board could get together to determine the make up, it should include parents, representatives of the community (including members of the business community), student representatives, teacher representatives and the Principal. School^{PLUS} partners should be invited to become involved when needed as consultants. There should be a provincial guideline that describes the maximum and minimum number of members. The selection process should be determined by the local community and the Division Board.

Principals

Principals accented the importance of making sure the make up of the Advisory Committee is representative of the student body at the school and composed mainly of parents. Membership should include parents, community members, students, the Principal, possibly teachers and interagency personnel on an ad hoc basis. A nominating committee should come up with a list of candidates and elections should take place at a town hall meeting. There should be an elected executive with a maximum of ten members and only elected members should be allowed voting privileges. All positions should be voluntary with the possible exception of a hired coordinator.

Some Principals suggested that the Panel should be aware of the differences between rural and urban situations. In rural situations, elections are expected. In urban situations, the current structures are working. "They need some improvement, but why change what is working?"

Relationships

How do you see the relationship working among the Board of Education, School Advisory Committee, school and community to ensure effective communications and accountability?

Mixed Groups

All agreed that the focus of all relationships must be on what is best for children and youth. A strong relationship or a key contact with the Board of Education was thought to be important in order to ensure that local input and concerns would be heard. At every regional consultation there was concern expressed by those in rural communities that new larger divisions would not be able to maintain the close relationship to which schools had grown accustomed. Participants were concerned that as things change, the real and perceived distance between Board office and school would negatively impact Boards' responses to local issues and thus students' learning. Some suggested that Division Boards should consider creating a "communication network" and the School Advisory Committee could be a key link in this network. One participant from a division where amalgamation had already taken place described how the new reality was working in his area. He explained that Board Members in their division found the experience of attending Division Board Meetings "just to observe and listen" valuable. While they "did not attend all meetings, just some, and not always the same ones", it did allow them to "keep in touch with what is happening at local schools".

Many suggested that the Principal would play a key role in facilitating new relationships and building partnerships and processes for communication. Some also saw the School Advisory Committees and the Principal playing the roles of "critical friends" supporting one another but being honest with one another when concerns and issues arose. It was thought that to support the development of collaborative relationships, there would need to be a clear understanding of roles and responsibilities for both the Principal and School Advisory Committee members. Such understanding would help build trust and encourage the development of respect so necessary for healthy relationships. Along these lines, many thought that School Advisory Committees should develop a "code of conduct" that would serve as a guide for members.

Participants spoke of the importance of encouraging open and transparent sharing of information. This would aid in the development of sound relationships with school, community and Boards. In this regard, the use of language was highlighted. When communicating with community members it would be important to use language that was inviting and understood by all. No one should feel that they were being "left out".

Some participants suggested that the School Advisory Committee should be accountable to the Board of Education. However, there were also some who were concerned that this accountability relationship would weaken their input and voice into the education of their children and ultimately impact their communities in a negative way. Many District Board Trustees strongly supported a status quo relationship.

Many suggested that School Advisory Committees should also be accountable to the school community that they represent and there was some discussion related to how School Advisory Committees might maintain such accountability. The importance of maintaining clear lines of communication with Boards and school staff and with members of the community was emphasized again and again.

Role Alike Groups

Students

Students thought it was important that the perspective of students was not lost in a discussion about relationships between Board of Education, School Advisory Committee, school and community. They suggested that in order to ensure that the views of students were heard and taken into consideration, it would be important to provide students with ways to communicate their needs and wishes and participate in discussions that affected their education.

They also suggested School Advisory Committees would need to develop mechanisms or structures that encouraged and supported two-way communication between School Advisory Committees and Boards, between School Advisory Committees and schools, between School Advisory Committees and community members, and between School Advisory Committee members themselves. They described various forms of technology, such as e-mail, voice mail, newsletters, and web sites that could be used to support communication.

Students believed building positive relationships required everyone to be on the "same page". They suggested Board members, school staff and School Advisory Committees should get together to decide on a shared vision and shared goals. The vision and the goals could be referred to when making decisions on topics at hand.

Teachers and Support Staff

Teachers and support staff suggested that good relationships required clear guidelines and policies and clearly defined roles. They thought that from the onset, accountability should be made clear. Questions such as, "Are teachers accountable to the School Advisory Committee?" and "Is the School Advisory Committee accountable to the Board?" should be asked. These relationships should be sorted out and decisions should be published so everyone understands where they stand.

There should also be clear guidelines and policies regarding confidentiality of information and what types of decisions School Advisory Committees would be privy to. For example, School Advisory Committees should not be involved in performance assessment of teachers and support staff or in staffing issues.

It was considered important to maintain two-way communication between School Advisory Committees and Boards. Some suggested that chairpersons of School Advisory Committees should meet once a month with a division representative to discuss issues.

District Board Trustees

Many District Board Trustees suggested that the current relationship structures of local boards are working now and School Advisory Committees should follow this pattern. They also encouraged the Panel to consider recommending changes in legislation that would support the autonomy and authority of School Advisory Committees as these Committees would be the "eyes and ears at the local level". They suggested that there should be "two-way accountability" between the Division Board and the School Advisory Committee and that in order to ensure this, members of the School Advisory Committee should be selected through a formal election.

Trustees also emphasized the importance of ensuring that communication between the Division Board and the School Advisory Committee took place in an open and transparent fashion. They suggested that in order to maintain such a relationship, Boards would need to establish formal communication networks. Boards would also have to consider taking other steps to ensure that geographical distance between the Division Board office and the School Advisory Committee did not create distance in the relationships. District Board Trustees strongly suggested that a Division Board Member should attend all School Advisory Committee meetings.

The division could also support School Advisory Committee/Board relationships by providing functional and defined guidelines regarding roles and responsibilities and by encouraging School Advisory Committees to participate in developing a shared mission and vision and shared goals. School Advisory Committees could support School Advisory Committee/community relationships by employing "user-friendly" language in all interactions and providing a welcoming environment that would encourage all to voice their concerns.

Parents

Parents suggested that School Advisory Committees' relationship with schools, Boards, and community would require clarification. They thought that it would be important to determine who does what, who is responsible for what and how information received will be handled.

Many parents thought that circulating the minutes of School Advisory Committees within the community would help community members stay informed regarding the Committee's plans and actions. Various means, such as the use of e-mail, school or division web sites and newsletters, could be employed to accomplish this.

Parents thought that accountability would need to "go both ways". If the School Advisory Committee was to be accountable to the school and Board, the school and Board would also have to be accountable to the School Advisory Committee. This type of relationship would encourage mutual respect.

Division Board Members

Division Board Members suggested that there should be two-way accountability between Boards and School Advisory Committees. They thought this relationship could be developed by engaging in practices that supported open communication. Examples of such practices would include sharing of minutes, getting together for meetings at least three times a year, and participating in video conferences. Division Board Members also saw benefit in creating more formalized collaborative structures for communication and sharing, including holding an annual division wide forum where School Advisory Committees and Board Members could get together to discuss issues. In general, Board Members were in favour of all types of communication mechanisms that made sense for the Division Board and the School Advisory Committees.

Division Board Members suggested that by providing a clear outline of the roles and responsibilities of Boards and School Advisory Committees and in-service regarding these roles and responsibilities, the Province could support Board/Committee relationships.

Community School Personnel

Community School personnel suggested that the best way to ensure that a positive relationship between School Advisory Committee members and others was to make sure that all voices were heard and valued. They thought communication should be characterized by individuals feeling that "just as what they hear is received with respect, what they say is received with respect". To support this type of relationship they

..."just as what they hear is received with respect, what they say is received with respect".

suggested that clearly defined roles should be set out by the Province. However, there should be flexibility regarding how these roles are carried out.

Community School personnel noted that positive and accountable relationships between the School Advisory Committee and community, school and Board would occur if all were educated regarding the community education philosophy.

> "All levels need to be educated about the community education philosophy and adopt attitudes that embrace the idea of shared responsibility, especially the Boards. At our school we have a very good relationship between the Community School Council and the school. We have representation from many and the school Principal and Community School Coordinator believe their opinions, ideas and concerns are important and valid. The breakdown appears to be at the Board level. We seem to work in isolation with very little guidance or direction. We have been very successful, but could be more successful if all were on the same page and followed the same philosophy. Many issues that are important to the school, community and Council are not taken seriously beyond the school level."

Senior Division Administrators

Administrators saw School Advisory Committees advising the Division Board and the school and being accountable for the responsibilities that were assigned to them as a local entity. They suggested that the key to maintaining relationships between School Advisory Committees and schools, Boards and the communities they represent would be to establish workable communication networks. In this regard, Principals were considered to be key facilitators.

Administrators suggested that School Advisory Committees would require a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities and knowledge related to Board rules and regulations. They also suggested School Advisory Committees would need to find ways to keep in touch with community concerns and resources. Informal and formal communication networks would need to be developed.

Principals

Some Principals suggested that to ensure effective communication and accountability, a flow chart outlining Board, school personnel and School Advisory Committee responsibilities should be developed. Others favoured developing a "code of conduct" that governs these relationships.

Many suggested that School Advisory Committees would need to make a concerted effort to build trust within the community. Their actions would need to be seen as beneficial and their manner respectful. Their relationships with the Division Board, the school and the community should be characterised by open, transparent communication.

Responsibilities

The Education Act, 1995 sets out a wide range of roles for Local School Advisory Committees and District Boards of Trustees. The Panel provided participants with copies of relevant portions of the *Act* and explained that in some instances, Boards of Education have delegated additional responsibilities in response to local needs or circumstances. The Panel also noted that with the introduction of School^{PLUS} and its focus on enhancing educational capacity and ensuring services are delivered through or linked to schools, the educational programming role of the school may further extend responsibilities of School Advisory Committees. They suggested that given our complex changing learning environment, the role and responsibilities of School Advisory Committees might be expected to continue to evolve.

What should be the primary responsibilities of a School Advisory Committee?

Mixed Groups

Participants agreed that advocating for local school needs, both to the community and to the new and larger Boards of Education, would be a key responsibility of School Advisory Committees. This was a particular concern for those from rural Saskatchewan. They wondered if school division restructuring would leave them without a voice or a process to express their local needs.

School Advisory Committees were seen by most as an opportunity for parents and community to contribute to the enhancement of student learning and improved outcomes. It was clearly understood that engaging parents and community in the school and the activities of the school would in some way support student learning and well-being. However, opinion did vary regarding what kinds of things parents and community could or should do.

District Board Trustees from many rural areas were firm in their desire to maintain a "hands-on" managerial role with respect to bus routes and facilities management. Other participants suggested that the responsibilities of School Advisory Committees should be more focused on bringing School^{PLUS} to the community level. Some thought Advisory Committees should take a direct role in fund-raising activities. They saw fund-raising as an integral part of what they have always done at the local level to support their children and communities. Others thought fund-raising in schools should be abolished entirely.

Role Alike Groups

Students

Students suggested that the first responsibility of the School Advisory Committee should be to keep track of student needs related to their education and to make recommendations to others regarding these needs. The School Advisory Committee could also become more directly involved in making sure students' needs were addressed. For example, students suggested School Advisory Committees could help students who were interested in pursuing "separate paths of education" get the information they needed.

Students also thought School Advisory Committees could be responsible for "creating a network of communication between all levels of the school system so everyone has equal representation". This, they believed, would encourage community involvement in the school.

Teachers and Support Staff

... be the "eyes and ears of the community" and behave in a "non-confrontational" manner.

Teachers and support staff suggested that an important responsibility of School Advisory Committees would be to advocate "to ensure that student learning is number one". To accomplish this, members of the School Advisory Committee would need to be "global thinkers" providing the perspective of those outside the "education realm".

Some teachers and support staff cautioned that School Advisory Committees' responsibility should be to "advise and support, not dictate". School Advisory Committees should not take over the role of the Principal. They suggested the School Advisory Committee should not have the same power that some similar groups currently have in rural areas. Rather, School Advisory Committees' actions should be focused on supporting the needs of the community as it related to students. They should be the "eyes and ears of the community" and behave in a "non-confrontational" manner. Their responsibilities should be meaningful. For example, the School Advisory Committee might get parents involved in making presentations on bullying to other parents.

Some teachers and support staff suggested that School Advisory Committees should also be responsible for ensuring that local budgetary needs are met and the Board is kept informed regarding these needs.

District Board Trustees

Most District Board Trustees thought that the prime responsibility of School Advisory Committees should be related to supporting students' needs. They suggested that School Advisory Committees could fulfil this responsibility by making sure local culture was taken into consideration and local concerns were heard and acted upon both at the school and Board level. Many Trustees suggested that to accomplish this, School Advisory Committees should be involved in hiring, evaluating and terminating employment contracts of teachers and support staff such as bus drivers.

District Trustees also saw School Advisory Committees taking responsibility for making decisions regarding school facility use and maintenance and setting policies regarding inclement weather conditions. In general, District Board Trustees suggested that when considering what responsibilities School Advisory Committees should have, the Panel should use the existing powers of District Board Trustees as a model.

Some Trustees suggested School Advisory Committees should take some responsibility for establishing open dialogue between the school and the community. According to these Trustees, by listening to the community, School Advisory Committees could "direct those with concerns down the proper avenues". Because of their understanding of the community context, they could advise the school and the Board regarding local issues and concerns.

Parents

Parents suggested that the responsibilities of School Advisory Committees should be related to supporting the unique needs of students. They thought School Advisory Committees should represent families and advocate for special needs students, take part in activities that would help maintain the educational goals of the school, facilitate School^{PLUS} initiatives, advise Boards regarding the supports students require and present the needs of the community related to student learning to the school and the Board. Some also suggested that the School Advisory Committee should have some input into the hiring of teachers and support staff. A number of parents suggested that School Advisory Committees should also take on the responsibility of keeping their schools open, noting that in smaller communities "when the school closes, the community dies".

Division Board Members

Many Division Board Members suggested that School Advisory Committees' responsibilities should be related to bringing the parent/community perspective to the school and Board. In this regard, some saw School Advisory Committees becoming involved in providing advice regarding hiring school staff, busing, school closure and specialty programming. They did caution, however, that such involvement should not amount to "micro-managing".

Others thought that School Advisory Committees' responsibilities should be related to engaging parents and community members in the activities of the school. Along this vein, School Advisory Committees should be playing an auxiliary role in fund-raising, supporting the school administration and staff in the general operation of the school and informing parents and community members regarding the proper protocols and appropriate channels to pursue when dealing with issues related to students.

Community School Personnel

Community School personnel suggested that the responsibilities of School Advisory Committees should include providing support to families so children can succeed; providing input on school community issues; advising the school on community needs and strengths; playing a role in determining direction for program development; promoting the school and encouraging community members to become involved; encouraging parents and community members to provide students with learning opportunities by utilizing their skills, interests and knowledge; and advising schools and Boards on relevant staffing issues. Community School personnel explained that by providing parents and community members with "meaningful responsibilities", there was more likelihood that they would become involved and stay involved.

Senior Division Administrators

Administrators suggested that School Advisory Committees responsibilities should be linked to their understanding of student and community needs. They saw School Advisory Committees providing input into the annual development of the School Improvement Plan, providing input into hiring of school staff (although not part of the selection committee) and providing advice on locally developed courses.

Administrators also thought School Advisory Committees could assume some responsibility in the development of school/community/Board linkages. For example, given an understanding of the community and the school program, School Advisory Committees could help develop the capacity of the community to support student learning. School Advisory Committees could also promote communication between school and community and provide the Board with important advice regarding local issues and concerns and possible facility improvement.

Principals

Principals suggested that School Advisory Committees should be responsible for providing advice regarding locally determined options, locally raised funds, Board policy and school use and have some input into school closures. They should be the local "cheerleaders" for the school and support the school within the community and the community within the school. School Advisory Committees should also assist in developing the vision of the school.

Principals who participated in the consultations saw School Advisory Committees becoming the liaison between the school and community. They could help develop school/community partnerships and support school initiatives that honour community values and traditions.

Principals suggested that School Advisory Committees should not be responsible for fund-raising.

Supports

What supports would the School Advisory Committees need to do their job?

Mixed Groups

Participants understood that the introduction of School Advisory Committees would require the forging of new relationships and processes.

Participants understood that the introduction of School Advisory Committees would require the forging of new relationships and processes. They suggested that a first step in supporting School Advisory Committees would be clearly written legislation outlining roles and responsibilities.

Appropriate training and professional development for all those involved at all levels would also be needed if these new bodies were to be successful. The Panel also heard that some level of funding for each School Advisory Committee would likely be required.

Participants suggested that Boards would need to develop formal communication networks as well as guidelines regarding the duties, processes and protocols School Advisory Committees would follow. It would also be important for Boards to provide School Advisory Committees with opportunities to network with other School Advisory Committees within the division.

Some consideration would have to be given to supporting Principals as they would play a key role in the formation and continued operation of School Advisory Committees. Participants suggested Boards may have to consider providing Principals with extra administrative time. Some also suggested that a Board might consider employing a "School Advisory Committee coordinator" to provide administrative support for a number of schools.

Many suggested that School Advisory Committees would need to develop a "code of conduct" and a constitution that would guide them in their day to day activities and decision making.

Role Alike Groups

Students

Students suggested that School Advisory Committees would require some funding to promote programs they might initiate in the community. In this regard, students were particularly interested in programs that would connect students to their future careers in the workforce. They thought businesses might be willing to provide program support and some funding to help students pursue different education paths.

Students also thought that providing clear guidelines and training regarding the role and responsibilities of the School Advisory Committee would be helpful. School Advisory Committees might also require some support in the area of decision making.

Students thought that the character of individual members of the School Advisory Committee could also be considered a "support". The membership of the School Advisory Committee would need to be enthusiastic and focused on improving the situation in schools.

Teachers and Support Staff

Teachers and support staff suggested that School Advisory Committees would require support in the area of training/education. They would need training related to their role and their responsibilities, and education to understand community issues and school division governance procedures. A "code of ethics", a description of group norms and a policy handbook would also be valuable.

Some teachers and support staff thought that administrative and clerical support might be required and that extra funding should be provided to schools to cover such costs. Initially extra funding might also be needed to promote School Advisory Committees in the community.

District Board Trustees

Most District Boards of Trustees suggested that School Advisory Committees would require some support in the area of funding in order to carry out their responsibilities. Specific areas mentioned included, funding for professional development regarding roles and responsibilities, funding to help support communication with the Board and community, funding for research and funding for per diem and out-of-pocket expenses.

Many District Board Trustees thought that the Division Board could also provide School Advisory Committees with support by creating opportunities for Advisory Committees to communicate with the Board and with other Advisory Committees. Boards could also support School Advisory Committees by creating an environment that "fosters local empowerment and autonomy" and by treating Advisory Committees with respect and trust. Some thought that Boards could also provide support by providing a clear outline of the School Advisory Committees' mandate.

Parents

Many parents suggested that School Advisory Committees would initially need to be supported by a defined framework for operation and a meaningful purpose. Committees would also need to be supplied with opportunities to network with other School Advisory Committees and with the Board and some funding might be required in this regard. Some parents also suggested that School Advisory Committees would require education related to their role and their responsibilities. School and Board staff might require professional development support to help them work with the Committees.

Division Board Members

Division Board Members suggested that School Advisory Committees would require initial support in understanding their role and responsibilities. They advised that this support should come in the form of an orientation session and this session should be the responsibility of the Board, not the Province. Ongoing education and training for School Advisory Committees should also be available and might be accomplished by holding an annual convention, providing seminars on areas of interest and developing a policy handbook.

Many also suggested that School Advisory Committees would require some financial support especially for travel and communication related expenses.

Community School Personnel

Community School personnel thought that School Advisory Committees would need to be provided with opportunities to learn about the community education philosophy, the School^{PLUS} philosophy, their role and responsibilities and how to share responsibility with others. They suggested that the Board should be responsible for providing these opportunities. Because of the number of schools within the new amalgamated divisions and the increased distance between Board office and many schools, School^{PLUS} or Community School Coordinators might be employed to provide this education.

Some Community School personnel also suggested School Advisory Committees would require the support of the Board in the form of respect for and commitment to the work of the Committee.

Senior Division Administrators

Many administrators suggested that from the outset, the framework that the Panel is developing should provide School Advisory Committees with certain types of support. For example, the framework should outline what types of in-service are required for school staff and Board Members and administrative staff. It should provide clear expectations regarding the role and responsibilities of School Advisory Committees describing exactly what they are accountable for, but also providing for some flexibility to allow for local circumstances. It should also describe the communication mechanism that School Advisory Committees will use to communicate with community members, school staff and the Board. Some Administrators thought that support would also need to be provided in the form of extra administration time in order for School Advisory Committees to enjoy "unfettered access" to senior administration. Others suggested financial support for specific targets related to school improvement might be helpful. Many thought that the development of a "code of ethics" and "code of conduct" for School Advisory Committees to follow would be helpful.

Principals

Principals suggested that because they would likely be involved with the development and ongoing functioning of School Advisory Committees, supports would have to be put in place for Principals. Examples of supports mentioned included a community development worker or School^{PLUS} coordinator for each school, administration time, legislation that clearly describes the role and responsibility of School Advisory Committees and that clearly indicates that management decisions are the Principal's responsibility (that is not shared with the School Advisory Committee), secretarial support, professional development for Principals and staff and a provincially developed handbook.

Principals also suggested that the School Advisory Committee itself will also need to be supported. One specific suggestion was training in conflict resolution and mediation.

Section Three – Framework for Local Accountability and Partnerships

Guided by the criteria and keeping the insights revealed through the literature review and the consultation process and interviews in mind, the Panel developed the central components of its vision for school level parent and community engagement. The overall aim was a school level organization that would serve to enhance the learning success and well-being of children and youth by providing practical grassroots advice and support to schools, Boards of Education and communities. The members of the "local structure" would need to be representative of their communities and be provided with a legitimate opportunity for the voice of all parents, students and community members to be heard. The Panel believed that these structures must be important and that their work should be meaningful. Their advisory role had to be clearly defined and their responsibilities aligned with provincial and division goals and initiatives. Accountability would be an important piece of the framework and, finally, the Panel knew that in their day-to-day operations and relationships with others, they wanted the "local structures" to be approachable and responsive to parents and community and to cooperate closely with the staff of the school.

Our initial thoughts regarding vision included the following concepts and ideas:

The Panel set the following statements of vision and direction to guide the formation of its recommendations and began by settling on "School Advisory Committee" as a name for the entity. This comes, in part, from the existing legislation but signals that its work is at the school level, its role is advisory and it is a committee rather than a larger council or a board with policy-making powers. And, although it is not included as a part of the vision, School Advisory Committees, like District Boards of Trustees, are not corporations; they cannot enter into contracts or assume other liabilities nor can they take on responsibilities assigned to Board of Education in *The Education Act, 1995*. We do see, however, the School Advisory Committees as being within the legislated framework of public oversight of educational governance.

The Panel's understanding of local governance:

Local governance of public education is the process of translating parent, student and public needs and aspirations for the learning and well-being of children and youth into policies that direct the community's schools.

Vision

The School Advisory Committee must be an integral, purposeful and valued component of school division governance.

The School Advisory Committee is:

- Created through an election process;
- Integrated into the Board of Education decision-making processes; and,
- Guided by common standards included in legislation. Boards of Education address flexibility through policy.

The School Advisory Committee must be inclusive of the community and representative of the students in the school.

The School Advisory Committee:

- Membership is representative of students in the school; and,
- Advisory positions are included to support the implementation of School^{PLUS}.

The School Advisory Committee roles must be clear and well understood.

The School Advisory Committee:

- Encourages and facilitates parent and community engagement, developing shared responsibility for learning success and well-being of children and youth; and,
- Provides guidance and direction from a lay perspective to the school, the Board and community organizations and agencies.

The School Advisory Committee responsibilities must address key matters that make a difference in student learning and well-being.

The School Advisory Committee

- Focuses its attention on the areas of the School Growth Plan where the parent/community perspective and efforts are most appropriate and needed; and,
- Monitors its activities to support continuous improvement in the areas of student learning and well-being.

The School Advisory Committee must align its work with provincial and division goals and initiatives.

The School Advisory Committee:

- Work aligns with the provincial overarching accountability framework and focuses on related division goals and initiatives; and,
- Work aligns with provincial and division learning and well-being outcomes for students.

The School Advisory Committee must be accountable, transparent and responsive in its relationship with parents and the school community.

The School Advisory Committee:

- Actively engages parents and community members in matters of concern related to public education;
- Reflects the nature of the community in which it is situated by collecting and sharing appropriate information with others; and,
- Regularly reports on its activities to parents, the school, and the community.

For each aspect of the framework we discuss and present our recommendations together with a commentary reflective of our thinking behind each recommendation.

Purpose

The Panel's discussions about the purpose of School Advisory Committees always came back to the importance of encouraging and facilitating parent and community engagement and developing a sense of shared responsibility for the learning success and well-being of children and youth within the community. The Panel believes that for Advisory Committees to fulfil their role in school level governance, their energy must be largely directed towards this purpose. The literature suggests, and we heard it said during our consultations, that the best way to enhance the learning outcomes of children and youth in schools is to help parents support the school by productively engaging their children in learning at home. We believe that School Advisory Committees, properly focused, have the potential to support parents in this manner.

Fully functioning School Advisory Committees would support and help develop family enabling communities in Saskatchewan.

Our understanding of the importance of community engagement was reinforced by our readings in Doug Willms' text, *Vulnerable Children: Findings from Canada's National Longitudinal Survey of Children and Youth* (2004). Willms claims research suggests that vulnerable children exist at every socio-economic level in Canadian society. This reinforced our belief that the support Advisory Committees have the potential to provide is needed in all schools. We were also impressed with Willms' proposition regarding the importance of creating family enabling societies. Willms notes that the development of a family enabling society would greatly contribute to eliminating conditions linked to child and youth vulnerability and he further suggests that creating such a society "requires committed and charismatic community leaders, material resources, and a collective will and synergy among community members" (p. 367). We think that fully functioning School Advisory Committees would support and help develop family enabling communities in Saskatchewan.

Epstein Framework
Six Types of Cooperation Between Families, Schools and Community

Type 1: Parenting
Families provide a healthy and safe environment at home that promotes learning and good behaviour at school.

Type 2: Communicating
Families need information about school programs and student programs in a format that meets their individual needs.

Type 3: Volunteering
Families contribute to the school.

Type 4: Learning at Home
Families assist and supervise learning at home with the support of teachers.

Type 5: Decision making
Families play meaningful roles in the school decision-making process.

Type 6: Collaboration with the Community
Families gain access to support services from other community agencies and support other community groups in efforts to improve community life.

In considering the purpose of School Advisory Committees, the Panel was also reminded of Joyce Epstein's framework for understanding different types of cooperation between families, schools and the community. Epstein identifies six dimensions of involvement along a continuum, beginning with encouraging positive parenting practices and extending to encouraging coordination of community services and involving families in community organizations. An adaptation of this continuum appears in the Community Schools Policy and Conceptual Framework, *Building Communities of Hope* (p. 37). There we find the continuum expanded to include participation in governance.

As a Panel we found both these conceptualizations helpful. We also recognized that our emerging sense of purpose for School Advisory Committee involvement in schools addressed parent and community involvement from a different perspective. We not only wanted to encourage school-family-community partnerships and allow for participation in governance, but we also wanted to create a framework that would allow for the inclusion of family and community members in the structure of governance through a representative body. By formally integrating School Advisory Committees within the governance structure, the Panel believes the capacity of parents and community members to share responsibility for the learning and well-being of children and youth will be enhanced.

The Panel thus sees the purpose of School Advisory Committees as two dimensional. One dimension is characterised by their activities. Advisory Committees will work to encourage and facilitate parent and community members' engagement, supporting the development of shared responsibility for the learning success and well-being of children and youth. They will also provide guidance and direction in the form of advice related to parent, student and public needs and aspirations for the learning and well-being of children and youth to the school, the Board and the community. The second dimension of their purpose is characterized by their place in school division governance. Working within the larger context of the school division and the more immediate context of their local school, School Advisory Committee activities related to parent and community engagement will be connected to the vision and goals of both the school division and the school. Because of their place in school division governance, their activities related to guidance and direction will enhance the vital role of oversight and local accountability. In this way we think School Advisory Committees will truly be recognized as part of the "village it takes to raise a child".

1.0 The Panel recommends that:

The purpose of School Advisory Committees be to encourage and facilitate parent and community engagement and develop shared responsibility for the learning success and well-being of all children and youth.

Formation and Composition of School Advisory Committees

Formation of School Advisory Committees

The experience in Saskatchewan with formation of District Boards of Trustees, Conseils d'écoles, Local School Advisory Committees and School Councils centres around elections of one form or another. In our consultations, many people took exception when the Panel asked, "How should the members of Advisory Committees be selected?" The word "selected" was chosen as a neutral term; it was meant to reflect a range of possibilities from election to appointment. The Panel was told very clearly that there is no support for appointments. They are seen as being undemocratic and, in any case, appointed members would not be seen as legitimate or "authentic" representatives. It was made very clear that the members who would have decision-making responsibility must be elected if they were to enjoy acceptance and support.

It was made very clear that the members who would have decision-making responsibility must be elected if they were to enjoy acceptance and support.

Consequently, as the Panel thought about how Advisory Committees might be formed, we sought to find a balance between the present public nomination and election process for District Boards of Trustees and the process that is more dependent on personal relationships used to identify executive members of Community School Councils. On the one hand, school communities in rural Saskatchewan are experienced with and have come to expect some degree of formality in the election of Trustees. This, we were told, contributes to public awareness, District Boards' sense of empowerment and to the communities' acceptance of their plans and decisions. Influence and credibility are tied directly to a democratic election process.

Influence and credibility are tied directly to a democratic election process.

On the other hand, the experience in many urban schools and especially in Community Schools was that the Local School Advisory Committee or School Council executive members were nominated and elected more informally at an annual meeting. This process, it is believed, tends to facilitate participation and is more easily administered. Empowerment in this circumstance comes more from the recognition that the members of the committee or council possess the experience, knowledge or particular organizational skills needed to fulfil their responsibilities. This is not unlike how Elders are identified in First Nations and Métis communities where relationships are a central component of community affiliation and leadership.

A further significant difference is that the entire school community, parents, teachers, support staff and other interested community members are the School Council. It is the Council executive that is elected to undertake the work decided upon by the full School Council. The comparable means of participation for the school community members in the work of the District Board of Trustees is the annual meeting and attendance at the regular public meetings of the Board.

In some situations, elections do occur. This, in the view of the Panel, is an important safety valve for discontent.

Both processes, in practice, appear to work quite similarly. A survey of Secretary-Treasurers revealed that most District Board Trustees are acclaimed. Generally, sitting Trustees make an effort to find a replacement when they step down from the Board and in few circumstances is there a competition for the position. School Councils work similarly; executive members find new people to fill positions and usually offer a complete slate of candidates to the annual meeting. The election, in effect, is a vote to adopt the nominations for the positions. Although in both circumstances the process begins and ends with nominations, this is not always the case and, in some situations, elections do occur. This, in the Panel's view, is an important safety valve for discontent. Where there is dissatisfaction with a District Board or Local School Advisory Committee/School Council, there is a publicly accessible process that allows for change.

The Panel recognizes the benefit of delegating authority and responsibility to more sensitively address variations among schools and communities.

The Panel's thinking was also influenced by the practice in many divisions of delegating responsibilities to District Boards. In a good number of cases, community use of school facilities, student transportation routing and school grounds maintenance or improvement decisions are passed from the Board of Education to District Boards of Trustees. Present legislation also allows District Boards to recommend a special levy on the district for the benefit of the school. This authority is rarely used but, with this in mind, many school divisions have provided funding to all District Boards together with some latitude in how the funds are used. This practice ensures some uniformity and equity among the schools of the division and extends to District Boards' authority over some expenditures. The Panel recognizes the benefit of delegating authority and responsibility to more sensitively address variations among schools and communities. However, to ensure public acceptance of the delegation of responsibility, the Panel also sees that an accessible and public election process is required.

A public nomination process with elections at an annual meeting was seen by the Panel as a reasonable balance. The public nomination process maintains the benefits of accessibility, credibility and awareness present in rural divisions. The Panel believes that "expression of interest" procedures, often used by local governments to form municipal commissions and boards, would be suitable as well. Election at the Annual General Meeting provides for greater participation in other decisions that may be taken at the time, adds to awareness and may enhance accountability by linking elections with reporting of results. The broad minimum expectation of public access to nominations and for election by parents and members of the school community should be set in legislation while the details on processes within individual schools and divisions could be set in Board of Education policy.

The Panel also sees benefit in holding the elections in the late spring to establish the Advisory Committee in advance of the school year and to create some temporal distance between these elections and those for the Board of Education, which are held every three years during October. A further consideration arises from the amalgamation of rural and city school divisions in most of the newly restructured divisions. These divisions, in the Panel's view, should have similar election processes for all School Advisory Committees of both urban and rural schools.

The Panel also sees benefit in holding the elections in the late spring to establish the Advisory Committee in advance of the school year ...

A good deal of feedback about terms of office was provided through the consultations. Most felt that an effort should be made to provide stability and continuity and that the length of terms should be as short as is reasonable to encourage participation. The Panel agreed with these views and believes that two-year staggered terms would best serve continuity and participation. As well, with elections for half the positions each year, there is a relatively easy way of filling vacancies that may arise. However, the Panel also suggests that Boards of Education, in consultation with Advisory Committees be empowered to fill vacancies should that be necessary and advisable. These situations would include where a vacancy occurs significantly in advance (say four months) of the next election and where the number of vacancies reduces the number of Advisory Committee members below a quorum.

... two year staggered terms would best serve community and participation.

There will need to be a fair degree of flexibility in the process of Advisory Committee formation. For example, in some school divisions particularly those including former rural divisions, there may be a continuing desire to see these elections administered and coordinated through the division office. In other divisions the process might be administered at the school level. These decisions should be made by Boards of Education to suit their circumstances and the wishes of the parents and electors who will be participating. As well, by assigning this responsibility to Boards of Education, future changes can be made more easily.

The School Advisory Committee should be composed of individuals who are reflective of the composition of the student body.

Composition of School Advisory Committees

Electors:
Parent electors are the "parents" of students enrolled at the school and may include parents who, by reason of residence or faith, are not electors of the school division. Parents should be eligible to stand for election or vote in the election of the School Advisory Committee at each school their children attend. Non-parent electors are electors of the school division where there is no school attendance area or the school attendance area boundaries are permeable, or are electors of the school division who reside within the attendance area of the school.

The members of Advisory Committees, with the exception of First Nations and student representatives, should be parents of students who attend the school or electors of the school division. Those who participate in the nomination and election process should be similarly qualified. This would mean that the parents of students who attend from outside the attendance area or the division might also participate on the Advisory Committee. Parents with students in more than one school should be expected to participate in elections at each school. To qualify as a non-parent elector, however, an individual should be a resident of the attendance area or, in circumstances where the attendance boundaries are permeable, be permitted to vote only once annually in the election of School Advisory Committees within the division.

A further and important consideration in the process of formation is that the Advisory Committee should be composed of individuals who are reflective of the composition of the student body. To ensure that they are representative, the Panel believes that a Board of Education might set aside positions in proportion to the balance of the student body. Where, for example, a portion of the student body is First Nations or Métis, the parents of these students should make up a comparable portion of the membership of the Advisory Committee. Where a special needs program is delivered in a school, the parents of these children should be represented in the membership. And where there is an English or French as a Second Language (ESL/FSL) program the parents of these children should be represented and there are many other examples in Saskatchewan schools including those that provide Prekindergarten and Day Care programs. Board policy on the representative composition of each Advisory Committee in the division should be reviewed regularly and the advice of individual School Advisory Committees should be sought. As well, Board policy should exclude Board of Education members from membership on School Advisory Authorities within the division.

The Panel recognizes the benefit of including student representation.

The Panel recognizes the benefit of including student representation in schools where secondary courses (10, 20 and/or 30) are offered and certainly of ensuring that the parents of students attending a public or separate school off-reserve are represented. In the case of students, the representative, and there may be more than one where that is deemed by the Board of Education to be advisable, may be elected by the student body or could be appointed by the Student Representative Council or school staff. How a student is chosen to participate should likely be left to the Board of Education that may believe it is best to delegate this responsibility to the school.

Student input to the work of School Advisory Committees should be valued in middle and elementary schools as well. While we do not see these younger students participating directly as Advisory Committee members, we do see them meeting as a group with the Advisory Committee to discuss specific well-being issues or to provide feedback on the learning climate. These students, too, are often included in surveys conducted to inform school planning and should be encouraged to reflect on the information gathered and how it might guide their actions and behaviours as their contribution to a School Growth Plan. We should expect and facilitate student engagement in their own learning program at all age and ability levels.

Representatives of First Nations students attending off-reserve should be selected by the First Nations involved.

Representatives of First Nations students attending off-reserve should be selected by the First Nations involved. As First Nation representative positions are determined by a Board of Education, it may be appropriate to include more than one representative from a First Nation to reflect a greater proportion of the student body and where students from more than one First Nation attend the school additional representatives may be needed. Again, these are decisions that are best made at the local level by the Board of Education with the advice of the First Nations and Advisory Committees so impacted.

The Panel is firm in the view that parent members of Advisory Committees are there to address the learning and well-being interests of all children.

School Advisory Committee accountability for decision-making and initiatives should be borne by the elected, First Nation and student members.

The Panel believes, and it was strongly voiced in the consultations, that the Advisory Committees should be composed primarily of parents of the students attending the school. Many said as well that there must be room for others and especially interested and committed community members. This consideration of the important role of parents in their children's education led the Panel to conclude that teachers and other employees of the school division should be enabled, as parents, to stand for election and vote in the formation of School Advisory Committees where their children attend school. The Panel recognizes the potential for conflict of interest, and especially where the children attend the school in which the parent works, but believes their interests as parents override the concern. As well, the Panel is firm in the view that parent members of Advisory Committees are there to address the learning and well-being interests of all children. They are not there to advocate for their own child or children. In addition, the matters that will be considered by the Advisory Committee do not focus on individual children or school staff members. The focus is on the collective interests of students and collective role of the school staff.

The Panel was also advised that accountability should be held by the elected members of the Advisory Committee. The Panel concurs with this view and includes students and First Nations representatives among this group. The Panel believes, in summary, that School Advisory Committee accountability for decision making and initiatives should be borne by the elected, First Nation and student members of the Advisory Committee, the majority of whom should be parents of the students in the school.

The Panel has appreciated the advice offered by many that words used to describe positions or responsibilities should be carefully chosen. The words "accountability" and "decision-making responsibility" are examples. Initially, the panel talked about "voting positions" but a number of individuals said this might be too restrictive and that the words clearly imply that decisions will be made by voting. This, they said, may frustrate those who would choose to decide by consensus or through talking circles. And, in any event, it might be best to encourage Advisory Committees to think through how they want to make decisions rather than impose an expectation on them. As well, concern was expressed that these words also may serve to limit the decision-making involvement of Principals and those in advisory positions. Such a limitation on participation is certainly not the intention of the Panel and we would prefer to encourage Advisory Committees to explore how they will include the non-elected members of the Advisory Committee in the decision process. The clear expectation of the Panel, however, is that the elected members, First Nations representatives and students are accountable for the decisions made. The Panel is recommending that Advisory Committees include in their constitutions the process they intend to use to make decisions.

As a matter of good governance, Principals should take responsibility for the appropriate identification of issues, the quality of background information they provide and, if they make one, for their recommendation but that they should not participate in taking final responsibility for the decisions.

A word about the involvement of Principals in decision making is in order. The Panel believes that Principals are and should be influential in the decision process. They are often counted upon to identify the issues or problems the Advisory Committee should be addressing its attention to and, like many in administrative relationships with Boards and committees, provide background information to support decision making and are asked for their recommendation. The Panel believes that, as a matter of good governance, Principals should take responsibility for the appropriate identification of issues, the quality of background information they provide and, if they make one, for their recommendation but that they should not participate in taking final responsibility for the decisions. Their ultimate responsibility, in circumstances where the Advisory Committee has final approval, will be to implement the decision of the Advisory Committee. And in any event, in most cases, the Advisory Committee will be providing advice to the Principal. The advice will be taken into consideration by the Principal as she makes decisions that fall within her administrative responsibilities. For a Principal to vote on advice that she is giving to herself would be unusual.

Inclusion of Special Advisory Positions

Many believe that School Advisory Committees present a new opportunity to support implementation of School^{PLUS}. A key benefit of a new school based entity with a focus on student well-being is that expert advice can be built into the framework. As well, community organizations like Recreation Boards can be provided with representation by including permanent advisory positions on Advisory Committees. Some schools and divisions may see benefit in including teachers and other staff as permanent advisors as well. The Panel has included provision for such positions to be added to School Advisory Committees to support planning, decision making and cooperative school and community based planning. The Panel expects, too, that even without such permanent positions, Advisory Authorities will want to draw on school and community knowledge and expertise by inviting staff and others to meet with the Advisory Committee to address specific initiatives or to provide information or advice. Permanent advisory positions would be formally established by the Board of Education while occasional advice would be sought independently in cooperation with the Principal.

Permanent advisory positions would be formally established by the Board of Education while occasional advice would be sought independently in cooperation with the Principal.

Voluntary Service

Public service as a member of a School Advisory Committee should be voluntary. This parallels the commitment to community service now offered by the vast majority of Trustees on District Boards of Trustees and members of Local School Advisory Committees, School Councils and other school level parent and community involvement entities.

The Panel recommends that:

2.0 There be a School Advisory Committee established at each school, that the School Advisory Committee replace all other local governance entities established under the authority of the Province or School Divisions, and that provision be made for two or more School Advisory Committees to merge into a single Committee but with the agreement of each involved Committee.

3.0 The Board of Education of the school division, within the following parameters and in consultation with the School Advisory Committees of the division:

- **3.1 Determine the number of members of each School Advisory Committee;**
- **3.2 The composition of parent members that is representative of the student population;**
- **3.3 The procedures to nominate and elect the parent and community members of School Advisory Committees; and,**
- **3.4 The procedures to select student representatives and for First Nations to name representatives to School Advisory Committees.**

4.0 School Advisory Committees be comprised of:

- **4.1 Five to nine parent and community members, one or two secondary student members in schools offering 10, 20 or 30 level credits, and one or more First Nations representatives where students resident on-reserve are enrolled in the school, and that the majority of these members be parents of students enrolled in the school;**
- **4.2 The Principal or designate(s) reporting to the Principal of the school; and,**
- **4.3 Permanent advisory members approved by the Board of Education in consultation with the School Advisory Committee.**

5.0 The minimum procedure for the nomination and election of parent and community members of School Advisory Committees include:

  5.1 Naming of an employee of the Board of Education other than the Principal of the school as an Election Supervisor for the purpose of the nomination and election of the School Advisory Committee;

  5.2 Public notice of the call for nominations or expressions of interest at least four weeks in advance of the date of their election; and,

  5.3 Election by secret ballot at an Annual General Meeting or other meeting of parents of students enrolled at the school and electors of the school division residing in the school attendance area called for the purpose of the election of parent and community members of the School Advisory Committee.

6.0 The term of office of members of School Advisory Committees be two years with no limit on the number of consecutive terms that may be served.

7.0 One-half of the parent and community members of School Advisory Committees be elected each year.

8.0 The Chair, Vice Chair and Secretary of the School Advisory Committee be selected by and from among the parent, community, student and First Nations members.

9.0 Vacancies among parent and community member positions, in certain circumstances, shall be filled by Board of Education appointment in consultation with the School Advisory Committee.

10.0 Participation as a member of a School Advisory Committee be voluntary.

Formation of School Advisory Committees in Special Circumstances

Comprehensive High Schools

Several Comprehensive High Schools are presently jointly administered within the framework of an agreement between the participating public and separate Boards of Education. The agreements with the separate Board of Education will continue but, with restructuring, the existing Comprehensive High School Boards of Education will be disestablished and the school will be administered by the single new public Board of Education. The interest of the separate school divisions is to see that their faith continues to be respected and, where appropriate, incorporated within the programming and administrative practices and decision making of the school. The practical reason for this arrangement arises from the fact that although the separate school division is responsible for the high school education of their students, they rely on the comprehensive high school to deliver the programming. The Panel anticipates that these expectations would be set out in future agreements between the separate and public Boards of Education.

The concern for the Panel centres on formation of the Advisory Committee and how the minority separate parents would be ensured of representation. The Panel sees that this could be accomplished within the joint agreement where it might be provided that the separate division would identify some number of parents to participate on the School Advisory Committee. The procedure for identification should, in the Panel's view, be within the legislative framework established for the election of all Advisory Authorities but in this case administered individually by both the public and separate Boards. Alternatively, the public Board may agree to set aside a proportional number of positions on the Advisory Committee for parents of minority faith students just as they may for Métis students' parents and one election process would be administered by the public Board of Education.

A further possibility is to address the matters of particular interest to the separate and public Boards, usually related to the facility, staffing and faith-related programming arrangements, within the joint agreement and possibly by establishing a co-management committee to address these issues and agreement renewal specifically. Such a committee, in the Panel's view, would not replace the need for a School Advisory Committee, nor, if each were carefully structured in respect to responsibilities, would it interfere with the proper operation of the Advisory Committee.

In consideration of these issues, the Panel does not believe any special arrangements are necessary within the scope of its recommendations or provincial legislation. And, more specifically, the Panel would urge Boards of Education in this circumstance to make no special arrangements for representation on School Advisory Committees in respect to the first election of parent and community members with a view to permitting the normal democratic election process to address these interests.

Separate Secondary Schools that Enrol Non-Minority Faith Students

Saskatchewan statutes permit students in grades 9 to 12 to attend either public or separate secondary schools and most separate secondary schools enrol students that are not of the minority faith that established the separate school division. The parents of these students should not, in the view of the Panel, give up their right to participate on the Advisory Committee; however, they should not be guaranteed representation. These parents should be permitted to participate in the election process with the other parents of students in the school and stand for election and vote just as other parents do. It is recognized that these parents will normally be in the minority; however, as non-minority faith parents, they have chosen to send the children to a school in a division where they are neither electors nor tax payers and presumably understand that the school must retain a strong and specific faith dimension. The Panel believes that this opportunity for involvement must not and does not threaten the faith components of the school.

The overriding consideration and goal of the Panel is to encourage and support the involvement of parents in their children's education. There should be no barriers to their involvement.

Hutterite Schools

There are 78 schools operating on Hutterite colonies. The schools are usually multi-graded with one teacher and the Saskatchewan curriculum is taught. The faith considerations, including belief in the benefits of communal living, influence the school program. The schools are formally administered by the school division in which they are located. The division provides the teacher, learning resources and curriculum and instruction development consistent with the provincial and school division goals and initiatives.

However, day-to-day, the schools are administered in cooperation with the leaders of the colony. The colony's Minister and German teacher play a significant role in advice giving and decision making.

The Panel heard that the Hutterian community is concerned about continuation of the understandings about administration of schools on the colonies. The restructured and much larger school divisions will be more distant from the colonies and the present understandings and relationships may be eroded. Representatives of the colonies advised the panel that they wish to see the present arrangement with school divisions continue. As well, they would like to develop the relationship by having a particular point of administrative contact with the new divisions. There is also interest in streamlining the relationship by establishing a committee of colony representatives or specific spokesperson for the colonies within the new divisions. The Panel believes that parents of students who attend the colony schools have enjoyed an arrangement among colony members that addresses their interests in participating in their children's education. These arrangements should be carefully considered by the Boards of Education of the newly restructured school divisions but no specific action is recommended by the Panel.

Community Schools

The 98 Community Schools represent a further special circumstance. School divisions receive additional funding recognition for these schools from the province and these funds are directed by the Board of Education to the schools. Provision is made for the employment of a school coordinator to provide school and community outreach support and resources are available to support the work of the Community School Council and its initiatives, such as Elder and breakfast programs.

These schools have developed a particular mode of operation aimed at engaging parents and the community, gathering support from community and provincial organizations and agencies, and focusing school programming and curriculum more sensitively and directly on First Nations and Métis culture. The Department of Learning has played a significant role in these developments at the school level. Handbooks like *Building Communities of Hope* and related "best practice" support materials set out expectations around the formation, operation and responsibilities of Community School Councils.

Although there is a good deal of commonality between the objectives of these Department materials and the views of the Panel, there are some differences. Most critically, it is the Panel's view that these Councils now operate somewhat outside the framework the Panel is proposing and, in some circumstances, they may not be in sufficient alignment with the authority of the Board of Education and responsibilities of the school division. The Panel is recommending that the relationship be realigned in concert with that of Advisory Committees in other schools. A key aspect of this arrangement is that Boards of Education assume the full responsibility for the establishment, maintenance and ongoing support of Community Schools. This will take time and a plan for transition will be needed.

11.0 The Panel recommends that:

The Department of Learning, in consultation with Boards of Education, implement a transition plan for the formation and operation of Community School Councils to align with the establishment of School Advisory Committees as set out in these recommendations.

Conseils d'écoles fransaskois

The Conseils d'écoles fransaskois constitute a further special circumstance. They were established, as noted elsewhere, when the provincial Division scolaire francophone was formed in 1999. The Conseils have special status arising from language provisions of the *Charter of Rights and Freedoms* and these are reflected in *The Education Act, 1995*. It will be necessary to maintain the expression of these rights and provide that only rights holders may vote in elections and that the Conseils may continue to establish as non-profit corporations to provide certain services to children and youth. In other respects, the Panel believes that the Conseils can conform to the recommendations included here.

Northern Schools

The schools in Creighton, Ile à la Cross, and the Northern Lights School Division are recent additions to the public education system as it operates in the remainder of the province. A strong effort has been made to make the schools inclusive and responsive to the parents and communities they serve. A host of programs in support of student learning and well-being and community development are funded under provincial and federal programs. Each school is established as a Community School and there are numerous arrangements for First Nations and Métis engagement in school governance. In addition, because these 27 schools are dispersed over one-half of the province, a good deal of administrative discretion has been delegated to schools. This authority is exercised in consultation with Boards of Trustees and other entities responsible for school-based community programs, including Community School Councils where they have been established.

Parent and community engagement is a key feature of the present arrangement for educational governance and administration in Northern Saskatchewan. And, although the Panel notes elsewhere that the process of "involvement" must not substitute for the outcome of improved student learning and well-being, the Panel does not wish to have its recommendations interfere with the positive development of shared responsibility for education in northern communities. The Panel has taken this into consideration as the recommendations were developed and believes that they can be implemented in Northern Saskatchewan without detracting from the present levels of engagement and community support. Rather, the Panel believes there is sufficient strength and flexibility incorporated within its recommendations that these benefits can be enhanced.

Associate and Independent Schools

Associate and Independent schools fall outside the mandate of the Panel. Although restructuring may alter relationships they have with public and separate school divisions, these changes do not affect the work of the Panel.

School Advisory Committee Relationships

The broad range of school level parent and community organizations in Saskatchewan have served schools well.

The broad range of school level parent and community organizations in Saskatchewan have served schools well. District Boards of Trustees, Conseils d'écoles, Local School Advisory Committees, Community School Councils and several formal hybrids established by Boards of Education within the existing legislation are examples of entities that are structured within the "system". They are provided for through legislation and the means for formation and responsibilities are set out in *The Local Government Election Act* and *The Education Act, 1995*. Board policies speak directly to relationships and delegated responsibilities. These entities are a part of the governance structure of Saskatchewan school divisions; they are not independent or self-sustaining.

As well, there are entities at the school level that are not addressed by the legislation. Home and School Associations and School Councils are the primary examples. The Home and School Associations have been present in Saskatchewan schools for a very long time and a provincial organization was formed in 1938. The present Saskatchewan Association of School Councils (SASC) emerged from this organization. These entities in a formal sense, however, exist "outside" the school system. They are formed under their own rules, establish their own constitution and have no legal relationship with school divisions or the schools. Despite this independence, they enjoy a tradition of support and cooperation with schools.

There are benefits to both approaches. Entities that are a part of the system are assured of their existence and place within the school division. Boards of Education must ensure that they are formed and supported in fulfilling their responsibilities. In addition, the Saskatchewan experience is that many Boards delegate certain responsibilities to these entities. However, when insufficient attention is paid to relationships, when Boards pay too little heed to advice provided by these entities, and sometimes when individuals elected to them assume too great a responsibility for school operations, difficulties can arise.

Entities that are a part of the system are assured of their existence and place within the school division.

Entities that exist independently of the system have positive value as well. Because they are independent, they exist only where there is a will to form and serve a purpose. The focus is on supporting the school by helping to involve parents, assisting with special events and providing ongoing volunteer services. The method of formation and decision making is a key operational difference compared to the "legislated" entities. School Councils, for example, include all the parents of students who attend the school and other community members in some circumstances. They elect an executive from among the entire body but meetings are open to the full Council so all parents may contribute to and vote on all matters before the Council. This election and decision-making process is seen by those involved as an inclusive and inviting way to engage parents and the community.

Entities that exist independently of the system have positive value as well. Because they are independent, they only exist where there is a will to form and serve a purpose.

The involvement of these entities, however, is related largely to the school and its student and family well-being programs. There is less involvement with the learning program, Board of Education decisions and policy making or initiatives of the school division as a whole. However, there are some exceptions where Boards have established a division level governance structure inclusive of these entities to invite policy guidance from the communities it serves. Problems can arise in this independent arrangement when these entities take on a role that is critical of the school and school division. Also, it is not good administrative practice for the Board to delegate responsibilities to an entity that is not administratively responsible to the school division.

In some Saskatchewan school divisions, there are school level bodies that are established through Board policy and within the scope of provincial legislation but which have taken on characteristics of independent bodies. For example, Community School Councils tend to be formed and to govern in a manner that is similar to independent School Councils even though they are established under the authority of Boards of Education. Some rural school divisions have taken advantage of legislation that allows for the replacement of District Boards of Trustees with Local School Advisory Committees and these are often governed like more independent entities even though their constitutions are approved by the Board of Education. These very different arrangements for school level involvement are most obvious within the membership of the SASC, which includes a broad range of entities from independent Home and School Associations and School Councils to District Boards of Trustees, Community School Councils and Local School Advisory Committees under a host of different names that may not clarify their accountability relationship with their school division.

The Panel was directed to consider its recommendations against this quite diverse background of experience and within the scope of the criteria approved by the Minister of Learning. The goal is to establish a new common framework that builds on the positive aspects of each arrangement and leaves behind other potentially negative elements.

In consideration of its review of present arrangements for parent and community engagement, of the consultations and of the criteria, the Panel has determined that the Advisory Committees should be established in legislation as an integral, purposeful and valued component of school division governance. They would be a part of the "system", not an independent entity. They would be formed and their constitution would be established within guidelines approved by the Board of Education. In addition, the Board would be responsible for seeing that they were established and supported in fulfilling their mandate. They would have a clear, meaningful and supportive purpose. The responsibilities set out later in this report are intended to fulfil this aim. And, the School Advisory Committees would be valued – valued by the Board of Education as a key partner in educational governance; valued by the school as an essential contributor to school planning and decision making and as a primary supporter of student well-being; and, valued by parents and the community as a support for them and as a representative agent of student needs and the aspirations held for them.

The goal is to establish a new common framework that builds on the positive aspects of each arrangement and leaves behind other potentially negative elements.

12.0 The Panel recommends that:

School Advisory Committees be established in legislation as an integral, purposeful and valued component of school division governance.

The Advisory Committee is uniquely situated in the school community to solicit student, parent and community perspectives and to consult with and advise the school, Board of Education and human service providers. The evidence is clear that schools do make a difference in student achievement but so do families and communities. The contribution of these factors beyond the school is four times as great as that of the school. To improve student achievement, families, communities and schools must work together. They do and must share responsibility.

In New Zealand, where of all Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) members the greatest degree of parent authority for the operation of schools has been delegated to school councils, they appear to have little impact unless they attend to student learning outcomes.

The Panel begins with the fact that relationships among parents, schools and communities are important. This understanding about shared responsibility for student learning is well accepted by others in Saskatchewan and, through introduction of the concept of School^{PLUS}, it includes student well-being.

The participants in the consultations recognized value in the relationship so long as it was focused on what is best for children and youth. The evidence from the limited amount of research undertaken on this matter indicates that this is clearly the case.

Although it is generally believed that positive parent/school/community relationships are beneficial to student success and to enhancing civic capacity, it is not well known what kinds of initiatives contribute best to the desired relationship. The Southwest Educational Development Laboratory at Austin, Texas, which has established a valued presence in the research on parent and community involvement particularly in the United States, has reported, however, that to build relationships among schools, families and communities, supportive strategies include demonstrating active support from central office; honouring all families' hopes and aspirations for their children; acknowledging commonalities and differences among students and families; strengthening the capacity of school staffs to work well with families; making outreach a priority so that all families can be involved at school as well as at home; and, recognizing that it takes time to build trust (Henderson, A.T. and Mapp, K.L. 2002). There is evidence, too, that the benefits of parent engagement, primarily in their own children's learning, persist across all economic, racial/ethnic and educational backgrounds and across students of all ages and there is support in the research for focusing parental and community engagement on student learning.

Advisory Committee must take responsibility for fostering positive, student focused and forward looking relationships among parents, the school and community.

It is clear that establishing School Advisory Committees alone will produce no benefit. Consequently, it is the Panel's view that the Advisory Committee must take responsibility for fostering positive, student focused and forward looking relationships among parents, the school and community. Open and transparent sharing of information is at the core of healthy relationships and it will be critical for Advisory Committees to develop understood and acceptable ways to share information and to engage parents and the community with the school in using the information in planning and decision making. This will become increasingly important as data that is being gathered by the Province now about student success is disaggregated and made available to schools. Advisory Committees and schools that enjoy positive and trusting relationships with parents and the community and that have developed shared responsibility for outcomes will be positioned better to deal with the potentially critical consequences of the testing results. More importantly, however, they will be better able to make sense of the information and to create shared plans to improve together.

A culture of respect and trust is a valuable organizational asset. It is difficult to establish, easy to destroy and almost impossible to recreate once it is lost.

A culture of respect and trust is a valuable organizational asset. It is difficult to establish, easy to destroy and almost impossible to recreate once it is lost. School Advisory Committees will be primary contributors to the culture of the school. How they conduct their affairs, how they treat the information that is available to them, how they communicate with and engage staff, parents and community, how they solve problems and resolve conflict will contribute to the culture of the school. The point here is that the Panel believes that we have a choice about organizational cultures. We can choose to be a "watchdog", to focus on monitoring and controlling; we can choose to be confrontational, to focus on fault-finding and negativity; or, we can choose to be respectful and trusting; to focus on appropriate roles and decision-making practices and to hold the contributions of both lay and professional participants in high regard. Participants in the consultations urged that each Advisory Committee establish a Code of Conduct and the Panel agrees. Such a code should address expectations about communications and relationships among the community, school and parents and quite deliberately identify how the Advisory Committee can contribute to a positive culture.

13.0 The Panel recommends that:

School Advisory Committees be responsible for developing and following a Code of Conduct that fosters positive, cooperative, student focused and forward looking relationships among parents, the school and community.

Advisory Committees, however, are not alone in the task of fostering positive relationships and good communications. The staff of the school must see the value and importance of exploring how families and communities can contribute to student learning, how their knowledge about children and youth can be used to enhance student learning, and how responsibility for learning and well-being can be shared. Teachers and school support staff have a leadership role in this relationship that must be exercised ably and wisely.

It will be important for parents, community and school staff to work cooperatively, to share information and understandings, and to establish a culture of respect and trust. We see them working together, not at arms length with one group passing recommendations to the other that may or may not be acted upon, but with arms joined together deciding and planning jointly, respectful of the contribution every person can make to student learning and well-being.

Positive relationships, perhaps especially in situations where both professional and laypersons are involved, depend upon clarity and commitment to respect the difference in roles and responsibilities. Both the Province and Boards of Education have a responsibility to be as clear and forceful as they can be in identifying roles and establishing how staff and Advisory Committee members are expected to participate and contribute. As important as it is, role clarity alone will not result in respect and trust. Commitment, will and the belief that the contribution of each is valuable and necessary are essential.

As important as it is, role clarity alone will not result in respect and trust. Commitment, will and the belief that the contribution of each is valuable and necessary are essential.

The Panel believes that the Principal is the key actor in the relationship between the Advisory Committee and the school. There is ample evidence in the research that the contribution of the school Principal makes a significant difference in the success of the school, students and in parent/community and school relationships. It was apparent in our consultations that many regard the Principal similarly and believe that an open and inviting school climate often depends upon the manner in which school Principals interact with staff, students, parents and others. The Panel was impressed by the interest Principals expressed in taking responsibility for these relationships. We recognize, too, that as we

The Panel believes that the Principal is the key actor in the relationship between the Advisory Committee and the school.

"Leadership theory ... claims that one cannot separate the process of leadership from the process of building culture. Leadership is the creation and management of culture."

Sackney, L. "Re-culturing Amalgamated School Divisions: The CEO's Leadership Role". The Leader. Spring Edition, Vol. 4, 2005.

raise our expectations of Principals, we must also raise our support for them. Administrative time and support, professional development and collegial networking opportunities must be provided if our vision for school/parent/community relations is to be achieved. This reality should not be lost as policies are developed and roles determined.

Similarly, the Board of Education of the division must create and sustain a communication network with and among School Advisory Committees in the division. This was a strongly held view of those consulted largely, in the view of the Panel, to ensure that Advisory Committees understood division-wide initiatives and opportunities were provided for them to share their experiences, provide input and develop their capacity.

Senior administrators of school divisions will play a significant role in the establishment and ongoing development of School Advisory Committees. They must provide leadership borne from the belief that parent and community engagement matter, that the lay perspective on educational issues is valued, that schools must be transparent and responsive in their relationship with parents and community, and that sharing responsibility enhances student learning and well-being. The Panel believes that Directors and Superintendents are well positioned to provide the leadership that is necessary for success and that the Province and Boards of Education can count on them to do so.

As school divisions "re-culture" in the restructured environment that 2006 will present, it will be essential for school division leaders to include consideration of the important role of parents and community. The culture that is built in the new school divisions cannot be separated from the leadership Directors and Superintendents will provide.

To engage parents and community and develop shared responsibility for learning and well-being the Advisory Committee:

- *Understands Community*
- *Plans for Growth*
- *Advises the Board of Education, School and Others*
- *Takes Action on the School Growth Plan*
- *Reports Results*
- *Builds Capacity*

14.0 The Panel recommends that:

Directors of Education and other senior school division administrators take leadership responsibility for implementation and successful operation of School Advisory Committees.

Responsibilities of School Advisory Committees

The Panel believes that School Advisory Committees must be an integral, purposeful and valued component of school division governance. This close relationship is required for several reasons.

Advisory Committees do focus their attention on operations at the school and community level but their initiatives must be closely connected to and aligned with the overall directions of the school division. They depend on resources to support learning and student well-being that are often situated at the regional level or coordinated division wide. And, there is an expectation, most strongly voiced in the new larger divisions that encompass several of the present divisions that a key role of Advisory Committees will be to connect communities to the centre of decision making within school divisions. The introduction of School^{PLUS} and expectation that School Advisory Committees will contribute to its implementation places an additional requirement for coordination with the division and other human service providers.

This is not the case in most other Canadian provinces or in the expectations of Community School Councils in this province. The parallel structures to the proposal for Saskatchewan School Advisory Committees often focus their attention in the main on school level matters somewhat in isolation from overall division affairs and are not always expected to serve as a communication and resource sharing conduit with the Board of Education and other agencies. The Panel believes that an additional focus on close coordination and two-way communication among Advisory Committees and with the Board of Education in school divisions will contribute to effective governance, will help to align services and supports for learning, and will assist to maintain the focus of attention on student learning and well-being.

Key elements in this alignment will include provincial school improvement and accountability initiatives. The School^{PLUS} Effective Practices Framework provides a consistent focus among schools on components of school operation that are known to contribute significantly to student success. By addressing the attention of all School Advisory Committees on these effective practices, alignment of initiative and effort will be achieved. Similarly, the Department of Learning development of a provincial accountability framework and measures of progress will focus attention on outcomes like student achievement and well-being, school completion and transitions to work and further education.

The School^{PLUS} Effective Practices Framework provides a consistent focus among schools on components of school operation that are known to contribute significantly to student success.

The Panel is convinced that School Advisory Committees must operate within the scope of provincial legislation and Board of Education policy. The responsibilities discussed below are described within this context.

Understands Community

15.0 The Panel recommends that:
School Advisory Committees encourage and facilitate parent and community engagement and develop shared responsibility for the learning success and well-being of all children and youth by:

15.1 Understanding the school and its community's economic, social and health conditions and needs and their aspirations for child and youth learning and well-being and to becoming knowledgeable about resources and supports for the school, parents and community.

School Advisory Committees seek to understand the community and gather parent, family and community support for student learning and the programs of the school. Communities are unique and as was stated in one of our consultations, "The members of School Advisory Committees understand the pulse of the community". The Panel believes that Advisory Committees will need to become a reliable and expert source of information about the school community. It is essential in the Panel's view that Advisory Committees put a good deal of effort into becoming familiar with all parts of the community – each racial/ethnic group, all socio-economic segments and every age grouping.

School Advisory Committees may also take the initiative to gather information from students, parents and others in the community around components of the School^{PLUS} Effective Practices Framework. Data about community supports and family needs can guide the establishment of prevention, numeracy and literacy programs. Matching available community resources and the desire of others to contribute to child and youth well-being with student needs is what creating shared responsibility for learning success is all about. We see the Advisory Committee assisting Regional Health Authorities to identify child and youth health needs, working with Public Libraries to identify family literacy needs and access expectations, and collaborating with Recreation Boards to understand community recreation requirements. By paying close attention to existing information about community health and economic indicators, housing and social conditions, crime and other statistics, and non-governmental community development initiatives, Advisory Committees will improve both the quality and breadth of advice they can offer. With an accurate and comprehensive understanding of community and the school, the Advisory Committee is well positioned to represent the community to the Board of Education and others.

As examples of initiatives related to their responsibility to understand the community, the Panel sees Advisory Authorities:

- Establishing communications networks and information-gathering strategies;
- Acting as an informal sounding board for the Board of Education and others; and,
- Identifying and supporting linkages and partnerships with community Arts Boards, work places, and providers of family supports.

Plans for Growth

15.0 The Panel recommends that:
School Advisory Committees encourage and facilitate parent and community engagement and develop shared responsibility for the learning success and well-being of all children and youth by:
15.2 Jointly and in cooperation with the Principal and staff of the school, developing and approving a School Growth Plan aligned with the school division strategic plan, for recommendation to the Board of Education.

School Advisory Committees jointly engage with the school staff and others in the development and recommendation of a School Growth Plan. The Panel believes that the Advisory Committee should work with the school staff and others to identify directions, goals, strategies and outcome measures and that these should be documented in a comprehensive plan. The Panel also recognizes that the Principal has the administrative responsibility for seeing that a plan is developed and implemented to guide the school. This parallels practice elsewhere and is a key process measure to ensure that the input of staff and community are appropriately incorporated in the plan and that overall directions are aligned with school division priorities.

The Panel has used "School Growth Plan" as a general term to refer to all improvement plans that may be developed at the school level. The Panel recognizes that the province and school divisions use different terms to refer to school-planning documents.

The Panel also believes that School Growth Plans should be developed within the School^{PLUS} Effective Practices Framework. This, in our view, represents the best currently available conceptual map for school level planning. The components of the framework are factors critical to student success and represent the best promise for impact on improvement of learning outcomes and student well-being. It is these elements that should be the focus of Advisory Committee attention as they plan together with the school staff.

Specific initiatives that might be undertaken by the Advisory Committee are incorporated in and aligned with the School Growth Plan.

Specific initiatives that might be undertaken by the Advisory Committee are incorporated in and aligned with the School Growth Plan. Surveying the community about parent learning needs, developing community based outreach programs to support infant care needs, and identifying new recreation possibilities in support of the school health program are initiatives for which an Advisory Committee could take special responsibility. Actions taken to achieve the main body of the plan should be the responsibility of the school staff. The planning suggestions offered for Community Schools in the Department of Learning resource, *Building Communities of Hope*, are a positive example of school level planning envisioned by the Panel.

A further point that requires mention is the fact that the research has not shown clearly that simply having a plan produces an effect on student achievement. Other factors such as collegial relationships among staff, in-classroom academic focus, and parental engagement in their children's learning have a powerful and known impact on learning outcomes. The benefits of planning and of its formal approval, however, are known to contribute to good governance, public accountability and civic responsibility. More important to children and youth is the benefit that arises from focusing planning initiatives and ultimately improvement effort on those matters that are known to have an impact on student learning and well-being.

Advises the Board of Education, the School and Others

15.0 The Panel recommends that:
School Advisory Committees encourage and facilitate parent and community engagement and develop shared responsibility for the learning success and well-being of all children and youth by:

- **15.3 Providing advice and approval on certain matters including:**
  - **15.3.1 advice to the Board of Education to represent parents, students and community on policies, programs and educational service delivery decisions, including grade discontinuance, school closure, religious instruction, and language of instruction;**
  - **15.3.2 advice to the school on its programs and operations;**
  - **15.3.3 advice to other organizations, agencies and governments on the learning and well-being needs of children and youth; and,**
  - **15.3.4 approval of school fees and fund-raising activities and the Student Code of Conduct.**

The consultations were clear in the desire of many to see that School Advisory Committees play a central role in advice giving to Boards of Education, the school, and others. This is particularly true in rural school divisions where there is concern that the views of communities may be unknown or not addressed in the division level decision-making process. The recent Saskatchewan educational decision-making experience with close personal relationships and understandings cannot be easily continued, but new communication mechanisms and networks can be put in place to ensure that the community voice is heard and understood. The Panel also sees a key role for Advisory Committees in sharing information with Regional Health Authorities and others to support child and youth well-being. School Advisory Committees should play an important role in the communications pattern developed within the new school divisions.

The Panel sees "consultation" as a process that includes seeking input and advice especially from those that may be impacted by a decision, reporting back to those consulted on the decision taken, and explaining how the input was taken into consideration as the decision was made.

Advises the Board of Education

A School Advisory Committee will advise the Board of Education on decisions and division policy that affect student learning and well-being, and services to the school. The Panel believes that Boards of Education should rely upon Advisory Committees, among other groups and organizations within the division, as a means to assess the impacts of policy, and to gauge parent and public acceptance and understanding of new initiatives.

School Advisory Committees should be expected to provide advice to the Board of Education on the educational program and its delivery, religious instruction, and language of instruction within the school.

The consultation process adopted by a Board of Education as it affects an individual Advisory Committee might be considered in three broad categories. First, the Board will want to seek the input of Advisory Committees on the general division wide policy and decisions, including the school division strategic plan, budget and other specific initiatives.

A second consultation category is more specific to the school and community. School Advisory Committees should be expected to provide advice to the Board of Education on the educational program and its delivery, religious instruction, and language of instruction within the school. These particular areas of consultation are included in present statutes as matters of special consideration at the school level. While there is merit in continuing to include a special focus on these matters, some changes should be considered.

The Education Act, 1995 provides that a District Board of Trustees may recommend grade discontinuance or school closure to the Board of Education and, in this circumstance, the Board is not required to undertake the full six-month consultation process leading to a decision to discontinue grades or close the school. The Panel anticipates that in the case of rural Saskatchewan, no change will be made in the statutes related to the responsibilities of Boards of Education related to school closure. And, although we are recommending a change in the election process, Advisory Committees should continue to be consulted on grade discontinuance and school closure decisions. The Panel also believes that a requirement to consult on these questions should not be limited to rural schools but apply in all circumstances, both rural and urban. Urban Boards of Education have regularly consulted broadly and at length as school closure and grade discontinuance decisions have been made in the past and we should expect this practice to continue. We note that, only in rare circumstances has a District Board of Trustees agreed to closure and has the consultation process being abbreviated; however, the Panel believes that this possibility should continue as a component of the community consultation process. In any event, it is now and should remain the Board of Education's responsibility to make the final grade discontinuance or school closure decision.

Decisions about arrangements for religious instruction and about the language of instruction should also be informed by the advice of Advisory Committees. Although the cultural and religious variation among communities within the same school division cannot be easily addressed by a single approach or policy on these questions, the final approval of the Board of Education in these two matters is essential. Clarification in legislation of these responsibilities based upon recent court and tribunal decisions is, however, in order.

A third category of advice giving relates to those questions that are more properly professional responsibilities. For example, staff recruitment, selection, supervision and deployment are professional responsibilities. These activities are guided by legislation, Board of Education policy, principles and codes of professional practice and administrative knowledge. The Advisory Committee, in the Panel's view, should have no direct involvement. *The Education Act, 1995* assigns the responsibility for teacher selection and contract termination to Boards of Education. This is a responsibility that can be delegated only to professional staff and is a practice that must continue.

The Panel believes that advice the Advisory Committee provides to the school should be directed to or through the Principal. Only in specific and well-understood circumstances should advice be directed to other members of the staff.

However, this does not preclude School Advisory Committees from having some input to these responsibilities, and it would benefit Advisory Committees and others to have some means to channel their advice. In these cases, the Panel believes that it would be best to focus advice giving on general criteria rather than on individuals. For example, in discussion with the Principal, the Advisory Committee may suggest to the Board of Education that the students and community would benefit from having a teacher who is a Cree speaker or who could enhance the school's capacity to interpret achievement data. The expectation would be that the administration of the division would take this into consideration as staffing decisions are made. In all cases, however, it must be made clear that School Advisory Committees address concerns and suggestions at the level of broad consideration and not at the individual staff member level.

Advises the School

The Advisory Committee will advise the school on its programs, services and operations. The Panel anticipates that the Principal of the school will seek advice on many questions, including the extra-curricular programs of the school, family-life curriculum, supports and enhancements for the learning program and e-learning opportunities. This responsibility closely parallels the advisory role of Community School Councils and the more school specific input similar entities provide in other provinces.

In addition, the Panel believes that School Advisory Committees should approve certain school specific matters. These include the jointly developed School Growth Plan, fund-raising initiatives and school fees, and the Student Code of Conduct.

Concerns were raised by some about the merits of including Advisory Committee capacity to "approve" any matter. Approval, in the Panel's view, is a process and is often a shared responsibility. In respect to the areas of approval recommended, the Panel sees Advisory Committee approval of the School Growth Plan as a step in the process of seeking final approval from the Board of Education. This, too, is a step that is shared with the staff of the school and is similar to School Growth Plan approval processes in other provinces like British Columbia, Quebec and Nova Scotia.

Approval of fund-raising initiatives and school fees is seen as a means to enhance transparency and public accountability.

Approval of fund-raising initiatives and school fees is seen as a means to enhance transparency and public accountability. These initiatives are also planned and approved within the context of Board of Education policy. Some Boards may decide that there will be no school fees or fees only in certain tightly prescribed areas and this will circumscribe or limit the discretion available to Advisory Committees. Approval of the Student Code of Conduct by parents and community seems a reasonable and beneficial means to secure support.

Advises Others on Learning Success and Well-Being

The Advisory Committee will provide advice to other organizations and agencies that are involved in providing human services. This responsibility emerges from their intended involvement in implementation of School^{PLUS}. As examples of those with whom Advisory Committees would work to support student well-being, we include the Regional Health Authority that may seek input on their wellness initiatives for children and youth and the School^{PLUS} Service Areas that may ask for assistance in undertaking a needs assessment in the school. Similarly, community Recreation Boards and Library Boards would benefit from advice about recreation and family literacy programs. We also see Advisory Committees planning with Post-Secondary and Workforce Development organizations about school to further education and work transitions.

It is essential to recognize that advice giving on any matter by School Advisory Committees is expected to be provided at the general and school-wide level. School student and staff records contain much sensitive and confidential information. This information is not intended to be shared with any individual or group for purposes other than those for which it was collected and then only with individuals, usually professionals, who require it to fulfil their obligations to students, staff or the Board of Education. There is no reason the Panel can determine why a School Advisory Committee would need information about individual students or staff. The advice-giving responsibilities of Advisory Committees relate to the students, parents, staff and community as a whole and, for this additional reason, such information disaggregated to the individual is of no value and must remain confidential.

It is essential to recognize that advice giving on any matter by School Advisory Committees is expected to be provided at the general and school-wide level.

Takes Action on the School Growth Plan

15.0 The Panel recommends that:
School Advisory Committees encourage and facilitate parent and community engagement and develop shared responsibility for the learning success and well-being of all children and youth by:
15.4 Taking action to fulfil initiatives assigned it within the School Growth Plan.

The School Advisory Committee will take action to engage parents and community, to develop shared responsibility for child and youth learning and well-being, and to fulfil its responsibilities within the School Growth Plan. The central purpose for establishing School Advisory Committees is to encourage and support the involvement of parents and community as partners to support student learning and well-being. For example, by engaging parents in their children's learning, the School Advisory Committee can enhance the family's contribution to student success; by developing shared responsibility for well-being, the School Advisory

Committee can mobilize the community's contribution to student health and social development; and, by responding to student personal needs, the School Advisory Committee can remove barriers to students' access to learning opportunities.

As well, Advisory Committees may take on specific implementation responsibilities within the School Growth Plan. These might be to inform parents about ways they can contribute to their children's environmental awareness or reinforce at home the numeracy skills learned at school, to establish a family literacy program, or to support community agencies in the development of recreation opportunities for disabled youth.

Achievement of the School Growth Plan, however, is a shared responsibility. For most components of the plan, the responsibility will rest with the staff of the school. But, for those initiatives that may be more appropriately undertaken by the Advisory Committee, it should take responsibility. Those initiatives that might be shared with the school could include providing parenting classes, establishing student tutoring support among community members, assisting families with Internet access, arranging for e-learning sites in the community and finding student summer work or community service opportunities. The School^{PLUS} initiative presents a broad range of possible learning and well-being supports that might be established by Advisory Committees.

It is in taking action on the School Growth Plan that improvement in learning and well-being will result. Monitoring progress ensures that everyone pays attention to the directions and commitments included in the plan.

A key action component for Advisory Committees related to the School Growth Plan is determining progress. The Advisory Committee should monitor results carefully and assist to focus attention on the agreed upon outcomes. Where a sense of shared responsibility has been established, information about progress can be used effectively to refine and improve the plan and to make adjustments in the contribution the School Advisory Committee might make. Similarly, we would see the staff of the school relying on the data to inform their decisions and achievement of their responsibilities within the School Growth Plan. It is in taking action on the School Growth Plan that improvement in learning and well-being will result. Monitoring progress ensures that everyone pays attention to the directions and commitments included in the plan.

Reports Results

15.0 The Panel recommends that:

School Advisory Committees encourage and facilitate parent and community engagement and develop shared responsibility for the learning success and well-being of all children and youth by:

15.5 Reporting annually to the parents and community on its plans, initiatives and outcomes and on the expenditure of funds related to the operation of the School Advisory Committee.

The Advisory Committee will account to the community and its partners. A key responsibility will be to report on achievement of the School Growth Plan and, with the Board of Education and school, to provide an Annual Accountability Report to the school community. This will become increasingly important as provincial outcome information is disaggregated and provided to divisions and schools. However, the Advisory Committee will be responsible for achievement of the initiatives within the School Growth Plan for which it is specifically responsible. At the same time, the Advisory Committee will provide a financial report to the community for approved school fund raising and for its expenditures.

A related responsibility will be to report on results of consultative processes. Just as it will be important for Boards of Education to formalize their analysis and response to consultations they undertake, so will it be important for Advisory Committees to ensure input is compiled and explain how this was taken into consideration as they made plans, decided on issues or passed community advice along to others.

The Panel anticipates that the meetings of Advisory Committees will be open, that parents and community members will be encouraged to participate, and that the record of proceedings will be easily accessed.

The Panel anticipates that the meetings of Advisory Committees will be open, that parents and community members will be encouraged to participate, and that the record of proceedings will be easily accessed. Increasingly, we would see that the Internet would be used to maintain parent and public awareness of initiatives and matters being considered by the Advisory Committee.

Builds Capacity

15.0 The Panel recommends that:

School Advisory Committees encourage and facilitate parent and community engagement and develop shared responsibility for the learning success and well-being of all children and youth by:

15.6 Participating in opportunities to develop the capacity of the School Advisory Committee to fulfil these responsibilities.

The School Advisory Committee will develop its capacity to fulfil its mandate. Like other entities, Advisory Committees must take significant responsibility for their own growth and improvement. Understanding of roles and commitment to fulfilment of responsibilities does not occur simply because governing entities like Advisory Committees are established. Rather, they arise from creating learning opportunities and encouraging development of personal and group ability. No one will take greater interest in this than those directly affected – the members of the Advisory Committee who must maintain their awareness of development opportunities and participate in their own learning.

The Panel believes that suggestions made during the consultations, if acted upon, will serve to develop capacity. Many said that Advisory Committees should develop their own constitution and the Panel agrees. This would encourage the members to think through their responsibilities and how they would wish to conduct their affairs, relate to the community and school, make decisions and interact with each other. We would encourage that the constitution include the Advisory Committee's Code of Conduct, decision-making process, conflict resolution procedures, and means of public communication.

16.0 The Panel recommends that:

School Advisory Committees develop and submit for approval to the Board of Education a constitution that sets out:

- **16.1 The Advisory Committee's structure and officers;**
- **16.2 The schedule of Advisory Committee meetings and means of public communication and consultation;**
- **16.3 The Advisory Committee's Code of Conduct;**
- **16.4 Processes that the Advisory Committee will use to make decisions; and,**
- **16.5 Procedures for addressing and resolving complaints and disputes that may arise from its internal functioning, parent and public communication and activities initiated and controlled by the Advisory Committee.**

Decision-Making Process

There are several different ways to make decisions. The practice of District Boards of Trustees is to build consensus among the trustees and then vote as a Board to affirm the decision. Their meetings are open to the public but it is expected that the public is there to observe or perhaps make a submission to the Board. Community School Councils comprised of all parents, staff and community members elect an executive to organize decision making, but significant decisions are made at Council meetings and everyone in attendance may participate in the discussions and vote. Often processes are put in place to encourage participation and supports may be provided to individuals to assist their involvement.

The Panel is recommending that the Advisory Committee be elected and be accountable, but how decisions are made should be left with the Committee. There are numerous possibilities available and they should be selected to address the interests of the parents and community and perhaps the type of decision being made. The inclusive process of Community School Councils encourages engagement, and engenders support and commitment but may not be suitable for all types of decisions. The Advisory Committee members alone, acting as a board, committee or executive, may be a better decision-making body when more sensitive matters are being considered. The judgements about appropriate process are best made locally and within the scope of Board of Education policy.

Related to capacity building is the need for Advisory Committees to establish their own internal procedures.

Related to capacity building is the need for Advisory Committees to establish their own internal procedures. This will include selecting a Chairperson and other officers of the Advisory Committee, such as a Vice-Chairperson and Secretary. The Panel recommends that the Committee elect their own Chairperson. As well, we believe that each Advisory Committee should also elect a Vice-Chairperson. The role of Secretary would be optional at the discretion of the Advisory Committee. As well, there may be circumstances where a staff member, such as the school secretary or coordinator, may be assigned these responsibilities by the Principal.

... there should be a minimum of five regular Advisory Committee meetings in addition to an Annual Meeting.

Procedural arrangements must also be established. The legislation should require minimums in respect to Advisory Committee regular meetings, the Annual Meeting together with reporting requirements, and allow for special meetings, including any that may be called by the parents of the students in the school. In this respect, the Panel believes that there should be a minimum of five regular Advisory Committee meetings in addition to an Annual Meeting. These meetings should be conducted in a way that encourages parent, student, staff and community engagement.

As well, there is merit in establishing a procedure to enable parents of students enrolled in the school to call a special meeting of the Advisory Committee to address specific matters related to parent engagement and the learning success and well-being of the students. The Advisory Committee should have discretion in terms of additional regular and special public meetings that they may wish to call. Boards of Education should also be provided with the authority to regulate this discretion, given the funding and meeting support implications. In addition, the Panel sees benefit in coordinating the Annual Meeting and release of the Annual Accountability Report of the Advisory Committee with public discussion of the Annual Report of the Division.

17.0 The Panel recommends that:

School Advisory Committees convene a minimum of five committee meetings and an Annual Meeting each year and that Board of Education policies provide for additional meetings, including provisions for parents of students enrolled in the school to call a special meeting of the School Advisory Committee to consider a matter of urgent interest concerning the learning or well-being of students in the school.

Complaints and Concerns

School Advisory Committees will need to develop means to manage complaints and concerns. The division between professional and lay contribution discussed previously is a helpful way to separate concerns that are appropriately directed to staff and those that should be directed to School Advisory Committees. Any matter concerning an individual student or staff member must be directed to the teacher or Principal. It is not the responsibility of Advisory Committees to deal with complaints other than to direct the concern to the appropriate individual. It would be beneficial for Advisory Committees to determine how complaints and concerns will be dealt with and, in particular, the range of concerns that will and will not be addressed by the Advisory Committee. In any event, as a Committee or as individual Committee members, Advisory Committees should not be involved in the investigation or resolution of disputes that relate to individual students, parents or staff of the school. Rather, Advisory Committees should assist parents and community members to understand how they might address their concerns to the Principal and staff of the school or to the Director of Education or Board of Education. In general, complaints or concerns that relate to the internal functioning, parent and public communications and activities of the Advisory Committee should be the only issues addressed by the Committee.

18.0 The Panel recommends that:

School Advisory Committees do not discuss, consider or provide advice about complaints or about personal, confidential information about students, parents, teachers and other staff of the school.

Supports for School Advisory Committees

The Panel heard many comments during its consultations about the supports that School Advisory Committees will need to be successful. Most importantly, people said that they would need human support to do their job. This comes in the form of training, expert advice and especially in communication. It was said several times that it would be beneficial for Advisory Committees to have a senior administrative contact in the school division office. This would be a person they could call with questions about procedure and school division policy, and with whom they could coordinate consultations with the division. The Panel believes that the restructured school divisions will have greater administrative capacity and that assignment of responsibility for Advisory Committees to a senior administrator can be accommodated.

19.0 The Panel recommends that:

Boards of Education establish a senior administrative contact for each School Advisory Committee within the division to provide advice, support and communication assistance.

Ideally the Panel would like to see staff support at the school level for the Advisory Committee and for the Principal. Coordinators in community schools have been a good support for Community School Council initiatives and an excellent "go between" for schools and parents. It is recognized that school divisions cannot make this level of staff support available for all schools, but the kind of work coordinators do in Community Schools is the same work that will be needed in all schools as School^{PLUS} is implemented. There may be other ways of bringing these supports to bear in schools by sharing resources with other agencies or by changing responsibilities of staff already in some schools. Although the Panel would be very supportive of these resources being provided, it is not prepared to insist that it be so at this time. Rather, this objective is best realized over the longer term so that the need and focus of responsibilities is thoroughly understood and considered.

Funding is identified in conjunction with implementation but is considered here as an ongoing support. The Panel believes that Advisory Committees will require some funding to cover their operating expenses. Meeting, communication and, in some circumstances, transportation expenses are obvious costs of operation. However, we also anticipate that Advisory Committees will develop ways to identify student learning and well-being support needs, to consult broadly with parents and the community, and to provide their advice to others. These initiatives will add some cost to their work that should properly be borne by their own budget. We would anticipate as well that Advisory Committees may wish to engage some expert assistance from time to time and this will be a further operational cost. An annual allocation within the school division budget of $2,000 per year for each Advisory Committee should be adequate in most circumstances.

The Panel recommends that Boards of Education provide School Advisory Committees with an annual budget allocation for operational expenses.

The Panel does not expect delegation of budgetary control for the school's operation to Advisory Committees. On the other hand, we might expect to see decentralization of some components of the budget to the school, with the Principal taking administrative responsibility. A Board of Education may, within policy, establish the expectation that Principals will seek the advice of Advisory Committees on certain expenditures, but this should not be confused with delegation of responsibility to Advisory Committees or as decentralization to them of budget decision making. This administrative responsibility should remain with the Principal.

20.0 The Panel recommends that:

School Advisory Committees be provided with a budget allocation by Boards of Education to provide for their meeting, communication and related operating expenses.

Training and professional development for School Advisory Committees, Boards of Education, division administrators and Principals is a further ongoing support requirement. Role clarity, development of relationships and procedural understandings will need constant attention. Professional development opportunities for Principals and others will be helpful in supporting their work with Advisory Committees.

As noted elsewhere in our report, the Panel believes that the Principal will be a key figure in the success of School Advisory Committees. To ensure success, we strongly recommend that additional administrative time be provided to Principals to support their work with Advisory Committees and the additional demands this and the accompanying work with parents and community will place on them. The amount of time will depend on factors more appropriately determined within school divisions and in consideration of the other supports that might be available centrally and within the school. Principals will also need administrative/secretarial support and this too must be taken into consideration as Advisory Committees are established.

21.0 The Panel recommends that:

Principals be provided with professional development, networking opportunities, administrative release time and clerical support commensurate with their additional responsibilities associated with the establishment and operation of School Advisory Committees.

The kind of training School Advisory Committees will likely require will be procedural. It is important to remember that Advisory Committees are expected to bring a lay point of view to bear on educational issues. It is not their role to make professional judgments or to relieve teachers and administrators from their responsibilities. These role distinctions must be kept at the centre of training programs and one way to accomplish this is to focus training on the Advisory Committees' role in understanding community, planning and advice giving. As well, the work of Advisory Committees can be improved by processes that support team building, decision making and conflict resolution. The skill and knowledge development that occurs as a result stays with the community and can be used by the individuals involved to support their engagement in other community based activities. As the Panel conceives of this type of support for Advisory Committees, it begins to take the shape of a long-term program, a community resource development program that should be delivered under the authority of Boards of Education as the governance entity with final responsibility for the support of Advisory Committees.

22.0 The Panel recommends that:

Boards of Education provide for ongoing orientation, training, development and networking for School Advisory Committees.

Section Four: Transition, Implementation and Evaluation

Transition

An Advisory Committee for each school should be established and operating by September 1, 2006.

Advisory Committees should be established as soon as is reasonably possible after the January 1, 2006 formation of the new school divisions. Elections for District Boards of Trustees are presently scheduled for October 2006, while elections for Local School Advisory Committees often occur each year. As noted elsewhere, the Panel believes that it would be best, on an ongoing basis, to conduct Advisory Committee elections in the late spring so that they would be in place and operational for the start of school in the fall. Appointments of individuals in advisory positions could be made or confirmed at the same time.

Transition from the present entities to the new School Advisory Committees should occur in the spring of 2006. There are two general approaches that might be taken. One is to make the change in conjunction with the establishment of the new school divisions. All existing entities would be dissolved December 31, 2005 and replaced early in 2006. This would offer an opportunity in the spring and summer for training and in-service before the new Advisory Committees come into full operation in September 2006. The benefit of this approach is largely in making the break from past practice and signalling the new structure and expectations for parent and community engagement. Difficulties, however, may arise where this is seen as a gap in school level governance.

A second alternative is to move more gradually by leaving existing structures in place until the new Advisory Committees are established later in September at the beginning of the 2006-07 school year. The benefit is that there is no gap in school level governance. However, this may also be a problem in that the change may result more in continuity of existing local structures than in implementation of a new vision for School Advisory Committees.

The Panel prefers the more obvious break inherent in the first option. However, for this to happen, supporting legislation would need to be in place and Boards of Education would have to establish the necessary policies, including determination of the numbers of members of Advisory Committees, the representative composition and assignment of responsibilities for the nomination and election process by the end of January 2006. Naming of individuals to advisory positions, establishing internal division communication processes and forming other policies related to the operation and responsibilities of Advisory Committees should probably be left until they are in place to provide an opportunity to consult with them.

Although school divisions that are not being restructured present a somewhat different circumstance, similar options are available. The benefits of a break in conjunction with establishment of a new school division do not apply; however, change at the same time as the rest of the province would assist to signal that a new entity is being put in place. For this reason, the Panel believes that the transition timing should be the same in all school divisions.

Acting on the option to merge recommended previously is a further matter to be left until Advisory Committees have been established. A number of smaller urban centers with two schools in one attendance area now have one District Board of Trustees. And, it was suggested during the consultations that there may be situations in larger centres where elementary and secondary schools may see benefit in forming a single Advisory Committee for all schools in a particular area of the community or arrangement of "feeder" schools. Decisions to merge should be made by the affected Advisory Committees and it may be best to provide an initial year of operation at the individual school level to make this choice. However, there are circumstances where this requirement may hinder the ongoing successful operation of a School Advisory Committee responsible for two or more schools. This is a matter best left to individual school divisions to resolve and the Panel is reluctant to be prescriptive. In general, the question to amalgamate should be left to individual School Advisory Committees. But, in the transition period, where Boards of Education can consult with existing local structures and be confident in a recommendation from them to provide for the formation of an amalgamated School Advisory Committee, they should do so.

23.0 The Panel recommends that:

Not withstanding Recommendation 2.0, Boards of Education, in 2006, be provided with the authority to establish School Advisory Committees for more than one school where existing local structures concur.

Implementation

It is the Panel's view that implementation is ultimately an ongoing responsibility of the Board of Education. Initially, however, the Province must provide the legislative framework and set out provincial expectations and supports.

The supports range from inclusion of appropriate consideration of School Advisory Committees in provincial initiatives to development of specific supports, such as a handbook, and including funding considerations in the Foundation Operating Grant. Implementation of the various components of School^{PLUS}, including school planning based on the Effective Practices Framework, is an opportunity to align the work of Advisory Committees with provincially directed processes and expectations.

handbook should be eveloped and be available n-line as an interactive aining tool.

Many have said that a handbook should be developed at the provincial level, possibly by the Department of Learning, to support School Advisory Committees as they develop understanding of their responsibilities and establish their governance processes. The Panel would like to see such a handbook provided on-line and that it be an interactive training tool. Advisory Committees could use school based technical learning resources to support group use of the on-line training.

Provincial recognition of the costs of establishing and maintaining School Advisory Committees should be included in the Foundation Operating Grant. The responsibility of providing operating funding directly to Advisory Committees should rest with Boards of Education. To the extent that Advisory Committees are to be seen as a school level component of school division governance, funding and other supports should be marshalled and provided at the division level.

At the school division level policy, guidelines and procedures will need to be developed. A good deal of work will need to be done initially to establish the appropriate numbers and composition of School Advisory Committees. Responsibilities of senior division administrators and Principals associated with the nomination and election process will need to be determined and assigned together with the necessary procedures and documentation. As well, some in-service for administrators may be needed to ensure division expectations for the process are well understood and implemented consistently and appropriately.

oard of Education xercise of the onsiderable local exibility associated with stablishment of School dvisory Committees must e undertaken with care.

Board of Education exercise of the considerable local flexibility associated with establishment of School Advisory Committees must be undertaken with care. There are many individuals within school divisions that will have ideas about implementation questions and Board policy. Teachers, support staff, municipal governments and Regional Health Authorities, for example, will have suggestions that should be considered. How a Board of Education consults and makes these decisions among the many other school division establishment decisions that must be made will set the tone for communications and speak to the organizational culture the Board desires.

On an ongoing basis, Boards of Education will need to establish communication procedures and networks with and among Advisory Committees.

On an ongoing basis, Boards of Education will need to establish communication procedures and networks with and among Advisory Committees. How the Board expects to consult on policy initiatives, how Advisory Committees are expected to communicate with the division and other "regional" authorities, and how community level consultations are expected to occur must be worked out. Over time, these processes will need to be reviewed and amended to align with changing expectations and growing capacities to carry them out.

The division strategic planning process also presents an opportunity to support implementation. It is expected that Boards of Education will include establishment of Advisory Committees as a strategic organizational initiative. This may be especially true in the new restructured divisions where maintaining community relations throughout a geographically large school division will be important. Organizational cohesion involves much more than relations with and among communities but in a public education system that relies heavily on local financing and that is committed to community engagement, these relationships are critical to success. As well, inclusion of Advisory Committees in the development of the school division plan will go a long way to creating a culture of shared responsibility, commitment to common goals and the desired organizational alignment.

Boards will also want to take some time to decide what, if any, responsibilities beyond those legislated might be delegated to School Advisory Committees. This should be a gradual process that is carefully implemented to ensure Advisory Committees are not diverted from their main responsibilities and focus on student learning and well-being.

School Advisory Committees will need to take a good deal of responsibility for their own development.

The Panel believes that School Advisory Committees will need to take a good deal of responsibility for their own development. As a matter of implementation, development of the Advisory Committee constitution presents a good opportunity for them to develop understandings of how they wish to fulfil their responsibilities and work together. Thorough and early consideration of a Code of Conduct, decision-making processes and conflict resolution procedures will support implementation of the Advisory Committee. It will be very important that Boards of Education have the necessary human support for these "team" development processes. Support materials will be helpful, but the Panel would advise against sending out a sample or recommended Code of Conduct without engaging in discussion among Advisory Committee members, including the Principal, to develop their understanding of and commitment to the manner in which they hope to conduct themselves and make decisions.

Development of the School Growth Plan will also be a key implementation process. As the school staff, Advisory Committee and others work their way through the planning process, expectations will be clarified, roles better understood and a clear workplan for the Advisory Committee will be developed.

24.0 The Panel recommends that:

- **24.1 Establishment and successful operation of School Advisory Committees be the responsibility of Boards of Education, including development of policies by January 31, 2006 necessary to support formation of School Advisory Committees;**
- **24.2 The Department of Learning include recognition of the costs of implementing and maintaining School Advisory Committees within the Foundation Operating Grant; and,**
- **24.3 The Department of Learning, in cooperation with the organizations represented on the Restructuring Coordinating Committee, fund and take leadership in developing:**
  - **24.3.1 An implementation and operational handbook available online for School Advisory Committees and the staff of schools; and,**
  - **24.3.2 In-service and training opportunities for Principals and members of School Advisory Committees.**

Evaluation

The purpose of School Advisory Committees is "to encourage and facilitate parent and community engagement and develop shared responsibility for the learning success and well-being of all children and youth". Evaluation of Advisory Committee success should be directed toward achievement of this purpose.

The critical outcome measures are those that measure student learning success and well-being. Provincial and division accountability assessments should provide data to guide improvement and measure progress on these outcomes.

Processes to measure parent and community engagement and the extent to which "shared responsibility" is developed should also be established. As noted elsewhere, success in engaging parents and community must not replace the learning and well-being outcomes that are the goals of public education.

Processes to measure parent and community engagement and the extent to which "shared responsibility" is developed should also be established.

The statements of vision for School Advisory Committees also provide a useful framework for evaluation. We might ask if School Advisory Committees are in fact "integral, purposeful and valued" and if their composition is truly "representative of the student composition of the school" that they serve.

The Panel also believes that self-assessment by School Advisory Committees is a productive focus of attention. Regularly, they should take stock of their accomplishments and review success in fulfilling their mandate. A handbook or online learning materials should include evaluative tools that would assist Advisory Committees to gauge progress.

A handbook or online learning materials should include evaluative tools that would assist Advisory Committees to gauge progress.

Others, including Boards of Education and the Department of Learning, should evaluate their contribution to implementation and successful operation of School Advisory Committees. The willingness of division and school staff to engage parents and community members in planning and decision making, the care Boards of Education take in considering the advice of Advisory Committees, and the extent to which the Department of Learning includes the role of Advisory Committees in provincial initiatives will send powerful signals about the value of parent and community engagement. These factors should also be addressed in any evaluation.

The effort required to establish a new province wide form of parent and community engagement will be substantial. The process will take time and will inevitably require adjustment and improvement. Evaluation of the initiative should be undertaken in the first instance to guide implementation and subsequently to measure achievement of the purpose. Not surprisingly, other provinces have undertaken evaluations and have found that there are problems with implementation and often they result from inadequate support and lack of commitment.

25.0 The Panel recommends that:

The Department of Learning undertake a comprehensive evaluation of the establishment of School Advisory Committees in 2008 with a view to enhancing implementation, resolving any operational problems that may emerge, and planning further periodic reviews.

Concluding Comments

The Panel's recommendations were based on the project criteria, the vision for parent and community engagement and shared responsibility, the review of the literature and research, and the earnest and considered advice so many provided during our consultations. This information, together with the Saskatchewan history and experience with school level parent and community involvement, established the context for the work of the Panel and guided five critical decisions the Panel made about the framework.

> **Common Structure**: The framework would provide a consistent local structure for school level parent and community engagement throughout the province. This demanded that the Panel determine not only what would be common but also where there should be flexibility, who should exercise it and in what circumstances.
>
> **Consistent Purpose**: The Panel decided that the central purpose of the framework would be to engage parents and to develop shared responsibility among parents, school and community for the learning and well-being of children and youth.
>
> **Component of Governance**: The framework would draw on the traditional continuum of parent and community involvement (Epstein model and adaptations) as the Panel chose to integrate school level advisory bodies into the school division governance structure.
>
> **Aligned Focus**: The Panel decided that the framework would support alignment of school based initiatives with division and provincial directions and outcomes. The provincial School^{PLUS} Effective Practices Framework provided a strong, high level and accepted foundation for alignment.
>
> **Appropriate Role**: The framework would balance role and responsibility with the formality of advisory body formation. The higher levels of responsibility, role in school division governance and requirement to be representative of the student body established by the Panel demanded public accessibility, transparency, and a reasonable degree of formality in the process of advisory body formation.

These critical choices were touchstones that the Panel returned to many times in its deliberations. But much of what we learned and heard went well beyond what the Panel might include in its report. We have attempted, by way of example and in our discussion about how we see School Advisory Committees undertaking their responsibilities and working with others, to include this additional information in a way that would assist to explain the reasoning behind our recommendations. At times, the Panel was tempted to be more prescriptive and to provide guidelines about how School Advisory Committees should conduct themselves, but this was not our task. Rather, the additional information and guidance should be included in the handbook we have recommended.

The Panel's mandate was to recommend a framework for local accountability and partnerships. The next steps for the Province are to translate the recommendations into statute, regulation and provincial policy. Within this framework, Boards of Education will need to establish policies on School Advisory Committee formation, on how the Board will consult with them and on what matters, to determine how assistance and support will be provided to Advisory Committees, and to prepare guidelines within which Advisory Committees can develop their constitutions and engage in school level planning, to name only two areas requiring early attention.

The Panel's charge was both demanding and rewarding. The Panel members are most appreciative of the opportunity provided to them to share in setting the direction for parent and community engagement in Saskatchewan schools. Schools can and do make a difference in the lives of children. But so do families and communities. Our children's learning and well-being is a shared responsibility we can only successfully fulfil in partnership. We hope our recommendations to establish and support School Advisory Committees will serve to reinforce this essential partnership among parents, schools and community.

In conclusion, the Panel appreciates the guidance we received from each of the educational partners serving on the Restructuring Coordinating Committee and the administrative and research support we received from the staff of the Department of Learning. We are most grateful for the sincere and positive advice of the students, parents, trustees, school council members, administrators and school staff who took the time, often in inclement weather, to participate in our consultations. As well, it was helpful to receive more formal submissions, telephone calls and emails. In every instance, we were reminded that our overriding purpose is to serve Saskatchewan children and to serve them well.

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Ward, L. & Robinson V. 2004. "Lay Governance in New Zealand Schools: An Educational Activity?" *Orbit* 34(3) pp 34-38.

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Appendix

Annotated Bibliography

International Literature

Connors, L. & Epstein, J. 1994. *Taking Stock: Views of Teachers, Parents and Students on School, Family, and Community Partnerships in High Schools.* Centre on Families, Communities, Schools and Children's Learning. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University.

This report summarizes the preliminary findings of surveys of teachers, parents, and students in six Maryland high schools regarding their attitudes toward and perception of the need for school, family, and community partnerships. Findings relevant to this discussion suggest that students wanted to be more involved in their schools and their education and wanted their parents involved as knowledgeable partners. Teachers believed involvement was important but said they needed more training in how to involve families. A chart describing strategies any high school can employ to increase family involvement in high school is included in the report. A number of these strategies may be of interest to advisory councils.

Centre for Educational Research and Innovation. 1997. *Parents As Partners in Schooling*. Paris, France: Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development.

This text reports the findings of an OECD commissioned study that investigated co-operation between families and schools in nine countries: Canada, Denmark, France, Germany, Ireland, Japan, Spain the United Kingdom (England and Wales) and the United States. The text is divided into two sections. In Section One, the concept of parental involvement is considered, with a focus on the roles that parents play in schools. Developments in several areas are discussed in a socio-economic context and roles are considered in two broad categories, collective and individual involvement. Four key messages regarding how to maximize the positive effects of parental involvement are provided: publicize and disseminate examples of successful practice; develop methods of replicating successful strategies; encourage genuine partnership by encouraging mutual respect and acknowledging what each party brings to the collaboration; and, clearly identify priorities to make the best use of the energy and resources of parents. Section Two provides a summary of the policies, structures and practices with regards to co-operation between families and schools in the nine countries included in the study.

Chadwick, K.G. 2004. *Improving Schools Through Community Engagement: A Practical Guide for Educators*. Thousands Oaks, Calif.: Corwin Press, Inc.

The text reviews the nature of, and reasons for community engagement, and provides a basic framework that can be used in designing and implementing initiatives to more effectively engage the community. It is designed for school administrators, school board members and teachers. Topics covered include, issues that can be addressed through community engagement; who should be included; techniques to help educators understand perspectives and expectations; strategies to increase active involvement; and, training that may be required for educators and community members to ensure involvement is effective.

Decker, L. 1990. *Community Education: Building Learning Communities*. Alexandria, Florida: National Community Education Association

This booklet presents an overview of community education for policymakers, community leaders, and advisory groups. It outlines the principles, results and program components of community education. It provides steps to follow when starting a community education effort, describes possible funding options, and suggests questions to ask regarding ongoing assessment. Specific examples of community education initiatives are also included.

Decker, L. & Ringers, J. 1995. *School Community Centers: Guidelines for Interagency Planners*. Charlottesville, VA: Mid-Atlantic Center for Community Education.

This book is intended as a guide for interagency planners in designing a school community centre that will meet the needs of a particular community. The role of parents and community is indirectly addressed in several sections of the text.

Decker, L. & Decker, V. 2000. *Engaging Families and Communities*. Fairfax, Virginia: National Community Education Association.

This book is designed to help educators use ideas for creating and maintaining family and community engagement to develop a comprehensive family-school-community involvement program that is tailored to their own communities. The text includes sections describing different models of community/home and school involvement.

Desforges, C. & Abouchaar, A. 2003. *The Impact of Parental Involvement, Parental Support and Family Education on Pupil Achievements and Adjustments: A Literature Review.* Sherwood Park, Annesely, Nottingham: Department of Education and Skills, Queen's Printer.

This review of English language literature initiated by the Department of Education and Skills, United Kingdom, was undertaken for the purpose of investigating the relationship between parental involvement and parental support and family education on pupil achievement and adjustments in school. Reviewers found that the research consistently shows parental involvement takes a variety of forms. Examples included parents providing a good home environment, parents working to keep lines of communication with the school open, parents participating in the work of the school and parents participating in school governance. The extent of parental involvement was strongly influenced by social class, maternal level of education, material level of deprivation, maternal psycho-social health, single parent status and, to a lesser degree, family ethnicity. Parental involvement appears to diminish as the child gets older (with the child being the mediating factor). It is also strongly influenced by the child's level of achievement in school: the higher the level of attainment, the more the parents get involved. Reviewers note that "at-home good parenting" has a significant positive impact on children's achievement and adjustment, and that parental involvement has its influence indirectly through shaping the child's self concept as a learner and through setting high expectations.

Epstein, J. 2002. "Present and Accounted for: Improving Student Attendance through Family and Community Involvement" *Journal of Educational Research.* 95 (5) pp 308-321.

This paper highlights the findings of a longitudinal study into the effect of specific family/school/community partnerships on student attendance. Two measures were found to support student attendance – effective communication with parents regarding children's attendance and providing a school contact person for parents to call regarding their children's attendance.

Epstein, J. 2002. *School, Family, and Community Partnerships: Your Handbook for Action* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, Calif: Corwin Press, Inc.

This text provides a research based framework for family/community involvement in schools. Six types of family/community involvement are highlighted: parenting, communicating, volunteering, learning at home, decision making and collaborating in the community. Within this framework, "action teams" made up of educational stakeholders (including state and district leaders, school Principals, teachers, parents and community partners) implement, evaluate and continually improve family and community involvement for student success. A supporting web-site of the National Network of Partnership Schools at Johns Hopkins University (www.csos.jhu.edu/p2000) describes how to use the Epstein Framework to encourage school-family-community partnerships.

Freedman, S. & Negroni, P. 1992. "School and Community Working Together: Community Education in Springfield," in *Educational Restructuring and the Community Education Process,* L. Decker & V. Romney, eds., Alexandria, Virginia: National Community Education Association.

This article describes the manner in which Springfield families, community and businesses, guided by the principles of community education, created an environment that provided support for the community and the school.

Hoover-Dempsey, K, Walker, J., Jones, K. & Reed, R. (2002). "Teachers Involving Parents: An in-service teacher education program for enhancing parental involvement". *Teacher and Teacher Education* 18(7) pp 1 – 25.

This article details the results of exploratory research into the use of an in-service education program (Teachers Involving Parents – TIP) designed to increase elementary and middle school teachers' encouragement of parental involvement by strengthening teachers' sense of teaching efficacy, beliefs about parents' efficacy for helping their children learn, and attitudes toward parental involvement. Findings suggest that the TIP program resulted in significant increases in beliefs about parental efficacy for helping children learn and produced positive changes in practices of involvement.

Steffy, B. 1993. *The Kentucky Education Reform: Lessons for America.* Lancaster. Pennsylvania: Technomic Pub Co. Inc.

This book chronicles the initial implementation of the *Kentucky Education Reform Act* (KERA) designed to increase student achievement in the state of Kentucky. Steffy, who worked in the Kentucky Department of Education when KERA was passed and took part in the implementation process, suggests that one important issue addressed in the *Act* was parental involvement in school-based decision making. As a means to address this issue, the *Act* stipulated that all Kentucky schools must operate school councils. The composition, responsibilities, and areas of accountability regarding these councils are described in "Empowering Local Schools", Chapter Six of the text.

Ward, L. & Robinson, V. "Lay Governance in New Zealand Schools: An Educational Activity?" *Orbit* 34(3) pp 34-38.

This article considers several aspects of the New Zealand experience of school lay governance through the lens of a study undertaken to reveal whether participation in school governance could deliver educational benefit. In New Zealand, each school is governed by its own board of trustees comprised of the school Principal, five elected parent representatives, one staff representative and, in the case of secondary schools, one student representative. Each board is formally responsible for the local management of the school and has "complete discretion to control the management as it thinks fit". The authors note that findings suggest that because of a lack of focus on educational activities, lay governance itself offered few educational benefits.

White-Clark, R. & Decker, L. 1996. *The Hard-to-Reach Parent: Old Challenges, New Insights*. Florida Atlantic University: National Community Education Association.

This book describes the benefits of involving "hard-to-reach" parents in their children's schooling and the barriers "hard-to-reach" parents may encounter regarding involvement. It also provides suggestions for fostering involvement.

Willms, J. D. 1992. *Monitoring School Performance*. Bristol, PA: The Falmer Press.

This book is a practical guide for those conducting evaluations of school performance at the school, district, state or national level. While the language used and concepts covered appear to be directed towards professional educators, certain sections may also be of interest to school council members seeking to understand issues related to monitoring school performance. The text discusses the social and political context of performance monitoring, reviews theories underlying monitoring systems, and examines strengths and limitations of methods for making school comparisons.

Canadian Literature

Alberta Learning. 2004a. *Preventive Projects for Immigrant Families: 2004-2007 Funding Guidelines.*

This paper describes the funding guidelines of a project targeted to address the educational needs of immigrant children by addressing the issue of school/family partnerships.

Alberta Learning, 2004b. *Conversations for Change: An Overview of Services for Immigrant Children and Youth in Calgary.* City of Calgary, Family and Support Services, United Way of Calgary and Area, Canadian Heritage, Alberta Community Development, Human Rights and Citizenship.

This report outlines the findings of a research study designed to gain an understanding of the services being provided to immigrant children and youth in Calgary. Recommendations suggest there is a need for more coordination between sectors who serve this population, a need to develop and integrate core cultural competencies into all health, social service, education and health delivery practices, as well as a need to develop effective partnerships to support immigrant children and youth (possible partners include volunteers, such as family and community groups, and service provider organizations).

Andrews, J. et al. 1999. "Some Observations on School-Community-Family Relations in Selected Schools in Newfoundland". *The Morning Watch,* 26 (3-4).

This paper considers the role that local knowledge and local theorizing plays in building positive family, community and school relationships. Written in the context of education reform in Newfoundland, (cut off of public funding of denominational schools and school district restructuring 1998-1999), the authors stress the importance of using local knowledge and local theorizing to fine-tune objective knowledge based on research. According to the authors, the reflective observations and understandings of educational stakeholders such as students, parents, grandparents, the

Principal, experienced teachers, counsellors, members of the business community, church people, politicians, and other personnel can contribute to the development of successful family-school-community relationships. They offer a number of ways parents can support schools as well as services that schools/communities may provide for parents to encourage their commitment to and active participation in the education process.

Canadian School Boards Association (n.d). *Parent Involvement and School Boards: A Partnership*. Ottawa: Canadian School Boards Association.

This book is designed to encourage school boards to take a leadership role in changes associated with increased parental involvement in schools, including the creation of parent advisory councils. It includes five sections. Section I outlines the parameters of parent involvement, describing the obligations of both parents and schools. Section II discusses possible benefits and barriers related to parent involvement. Section III provides some examples of parent involvement programs. Section IV describes the role of school boards in parent involvement programs, including a section on Parent Advisory Councils. Section V offers strategies and suggestions for boards interested in increasing parental involvement.

Canadian School Boards Association. 2001. *Action Against Poverty: School Boards Make a Difference*. Ottawa: Canadian School Boards Association.

This report provides a summary of a Canadian School Boards Association (CSBA) project called Mobilizing the Community. This project was part of the CSBA's comprehensive national campaign to assist school boards (in cooperation with other partners) in carrying out specific actions to address the issue of child poverty and its impact on school readiness and eventual school success. The results of the project suggest that interest shown by Trustees can offset the inability of senior staffs to focus on preventive activities when besieged by crisis. Community agencies can also provide support by giving feedback and encouragement to schools in building and sustaining interventions.

Canadian School Boards Association. 2001. *Social Inclusion: The Role of School Boards*. Ottawa: Canadian School Boards Association.

This publication offers a broad framework for school boards to examine their policies and procedures related to the child poverty and its impact on school readiness and eventual school success. In creating this framework the CSBA gathered information from students, parents, teachers and administrators on what they could do to contribute to social inclusion in their community. Findings from these interviews relevant to this discussion suggest that in inclusive schools, responsibility is assumed by all. All members of the school community have a voice, the neighbourhood is used as an educational source for the school (for example, hiring is done locally, parents run computer clubs) and the school as a resource for the neighbourhood (parenting classes, child-family centre).

Canadian School Boards Association. 2001.*Together Works Better: A guide for school boards working together with their communities for children and youth.* Ottawa: Canadian School Boards Association.

This guidebook is designed as a tool to help school boards develop partnerships both in and beyond their communities as they seek ways to support students in high-risk situations. The seven chapters offer the reader the opportunity to consider the reasons for developing partnerships; the merits of partnerships; methods for creating partnerships; challenges to partnerships; the dimensions of different kinds of partnerships; ways to sustain, evaluate and report on partnership progress; and, what to do when partnerships falter. Partnership profiles, demonstrating the ways in which several Canadian school districts have created partnerships with agencies in their communities, are included in each chapter.

Corter, C. & Pelletier J. 2004. "The Rise and Fall of Parent and Community Involvement in Schools". *Orbit* 34 (3) pp 7-12.

This article stresses the importance of questioning whether the policy and practices regarding parent and community involvement in schools are directed towards desired educational aims and achieving desired educational outcomes. According to the authors, more research examining the processes that link aims, practice and outcomes and more attention to specific outcomes that go beyond client (parent/community) and practitioner (school/teacher) satisfaction are needed.

Cavanaugh, B. n.d. *The Role of Parental and Community Involvement in the Success of First Nations Learners: A Review of the Literature.* Minister's National Working Group on First Nations Education.

This paper summarizes the findings of a literature review that sought to examine the issue of parental and community involvement in First Nations education. Highlighting aspects of successful programs, the review suggests that when First Nations parents are involved in education, student achievement increases and schools improve. The author notes that the term, "parental involvement", is an all embracing one meant to include other adults, such as family members, guardians and foster parents. Three areas of parental involvement are included in the review: parents as first educators within the home, parents as central partners within the school, and parents as advocates and key decision makers for all children and youth. The paper goes on to point out a number of challenges to increased parental involvement and ways schools, parents and communities can work to overcome these challenges. It also provides recommendations to the Canadian federal government regarding how the government can support meaningful First Nations parental and community involvement.

Collins, A.1996. School councils: A pilot study. *Morning Watch*, 23, 3-4, 33-43.

This paper outlines the parameters and provides the findings of a pilot study on school councils in Newfoundland. Seven school councils were involved in the study that examined issues related to the establishment and operation of school councils, including authority, objectives, functions, composition, responsibilities, communication, school board involvement, training and processes to facilitate effective decision making, team building and problem solving. Results of the study suggest that members of the councils involved agreed that the purpose of a school council should be to improve student achievement and to assure the meaningful involvement of students, parents, community members and educators in the school. Participants also highlighted the importance of school-based decision making and suggested that if councils were expected to be involved in such decision making (rather than serve in a purely advisory manner), this aspect of their role needed to be clearly outlined in legislation.

Collins, A. 2000. "School Councils' Chairpersons' Views of the Effectiveness of School Councils", *The Morning Watch*, 27(3-4).

This study was designed to determine the effectiveness of school councils in fulfilling their mandate as set out in legislation. In 1997-98, the chairpersons of school councils in five school districts in Newfoundland were surveyed to determine the kinds of activities in which school councils were engaged and to examine the processes that enable councils to undertake their mandate or hinder them in its pursuit. Results indicate that predominant issues occupying councils in decreasing order include operational details, school building, school improvement, parent involvement and fund-raising. Findings also indicate that as councils become more established, there is a shift from operational issues to school improvement issues and increasing parental involvement. Councils appeared to vary in the degree of decision-making authority they exercised from a great deal of shared authority to advisory only. Council chairs were interested in receiving more training regarding the role of councils. Factors that helped councils included support of Principal and support of school board. Factors that hindered councils included lack of training, lack of clearly defined role, difficulty in recruiting parents to serve, lack of time and not dealing with educational issues.

Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development Canada. 2002. *Our Children: Keepers of the Sacred Knowledge.*

This report of the Minister's National Working Group on Education describes the strategies and measures required to foster excellence in First Nations elementary-secondary education. The vision outlined emphasizes the importance of a "First Nations education system that begins in early childhood and includes adult education and training and post-secondary education, where the weight of decision making rests with First Nations . . . ." The report describes how this vision may be accomplished and highlights issues related to jurisdiction, infrastructure and funding. It includes a section on parental and community participation with recommendations regarding the same.

Devereaux, L. 1995. *A Study of the Leadership Approach that Facilitates Adoption of School Councils*. Masters Thesis, Memorial University of Newfoundland.

This research involving a number of schools in Newfoundland investigated the leadership approach of school Principals that best facilitates adoption of school councils. Findings indicate that school council members perceive those Principals who are involved in school councils as having a leadership approach that is more highly developed than Principals who are not involved. Involved Principals are seen to be more transformational in their leadership approach and more open to change. The author recommends that leadership training for Principals should focus on areas such as shared decision making, promoting collaborative and cooperative working relations with teachers and school council members, generating a collective vision, and building consensus and fostering group cohesiveness.

Joshi, S. 1999. *Assessing Stakeholders' Perspectives on the Status and Impact of Educational Partnerships in the High School Co-op and Enterprise Education Programs in Newfoundland and Labrador.* (Doctoral dissertation, University of Toronto, 1999). Ottawa: National Library of Canada.

This research study examined the attitudes and opinions of students, teachers and private sector members who participated in the Coop and Enterprise Education partnerships at the high school level in the province of Newfoundland and Labrador. Of interest are findings indicating that students and teachers paint a positive picture of the support they received from private sector partners. Private sector partners also characterize their involvement as both useful and valuable and they believe that their involvement contributed positively to making learning relevant. They thought their involvement also provided economic benefits for students and benefited the community, since it involved activities that promote cooperation, understanding and appreciation of the roles of other community members.

Lafleur, C. & Parker, K. 2004. "Extending Our Understanding of Collaboration: Building Professional Learning Communities" *Orbit* 34(3) pp 21-24.

This article describes efforts initiated by the Simcoe Country District School Board (Ontario) to build collaboration into the culture of the school system. These efforts were largely directed towards encouraging capacity building among Principals and supporting the implementation of strategies that help staff work together in a family of schools. One example was Principals' work with their school councils to engage parents in a number of school-based initiatives. The authors conclude that understandings gained by Principals working collaboratively and cooperatively with other schools did have benefits. Not only were Principals better able to plan and implement increased professional development with staff but they were also better able to develop meaningful school family relationships.

Lasky, S. & Moore, S., 2001. *Parental Involvement in Education, EQAO Research Series#6*. The International Centre for Educational Change, University of Toronto: Ontario Institute for Studies in Education.

This paper examines parental involvement in education, focusing on partnerships as the most effective model for parent/teacher/school interaction and examining the barriers that may inhibit effective partnerships. Using the Epstein framework as a guide, the authors outline six broad ways parents can become involved in their children's schooling: learning parenting skills to enhance the home environment; creating two-way communication between home and school about school programs and children's progress; providing support by acting as a volunteer; becoming involved in decision making; and, collaborating with community services to enhance integration of services. They also describe two general barriers to involvement: personal and emotional challenges (including communication breakdown between parents and educators, parents' previous negative experience of school and lack of valuing of parental input) and organizational and societal challenges (including family circumstances, school assessment methods, conflicting expectations of involvement, parent isolation from other parents and teacher isolation from other teachers). The authors conclude that a variety of research approaches and an action-oriented model of research (where parents are treated as resources and partners, rather than as 'deficits' to the school enterprise) are needed to meet the challenges they have identified.

Leithwood, K. & McElheron-Hopkins. 2004. *Parent Participation in School Improvement Process*. Toronto: Canadian Education Association.

This document represents the final report of the "Parent Participation in School Improvement Planning Project". The study explored the potential contribution of parent participation to school improvement planning (SIP). Based on the findings of this study, the authors provide several recommendations for policy and practice. They suggest policy makers devote more attention to enabling parents' direct involvement in the education of their children. Districts should be held accountable for the development of frameworks and tools for schools to use in regularly collecting representative evidence from family and community members about local priorities for the school's attention. Districts should also be required to clarify the reliability of test results at the school level and align the uses recommended for these data with the purposes they are technically capable of serving. Parents should be encouraged to devote most of the time they have available for children's schooling to directly assisting children master the school curriculum and when they feel strongly that changes in the school are required, approach school and district leaders in coordination with other like-minded parents, to request/insist on such change.

Levin, B. & Farthing, G. 2004. "Building Connections with Parents and Communities - The Manitoba K-S4 Agenda". *Orbit* 34(3) pp 13-16.

This article highlights the barriers that the Manitoba Department of Education encountered in establishing better school-family-community linkages and the strategies it has employed to address these barriers. The authors begin by identifying three categories of limitations. The first category described, limitations of perspectives, involves the difficulty parents and school staff may have in understanding each other's situation. The second category, limitations of skills, highlights the limitations posed by parents' and teachers' lack of effective listening and communication skills when working in certain contexts. The third category, limitations of resources, speaks to the lack of both time and personnel that schools encounter when attempting to build strong school-parent- community relationships. Strategies the Manitoba Department of Education employed to establish better school-family-community linkages include moving forward gradually within the context of present initiatives; strengthening communication between school-parents-community through various means (including developing an accessible website, distributing print materials and sponsoring workshop sessions to inform and encourage discussion); and, encouraging parents, teachers and administrators to participate in certain professional development learning opportunities. Support documents have been developed in the areas of conflict resolution (Working Together: A Guide to Positive Problem Solving for Schools, Families and Communities) and exceptional children (Working Together: A Handbook for Parents of Children with Special Needs in School).

McKenna, M. & Willms, D. 1998a. "Co-operation between families and schools: 'What works' in Canada" *Research Papers in Education* 13(1) pp. 19-41.

This article considers the trend of provincial governments across Canada to encourage increased parental involvement in schools (largely through the mechanism of school councils) as a means of increasing student achievement. The authors note that while the trend towards parent advisory councils is evident in most provinces, as well as in schools serving First Nations, other types of parent-school involvement appear to have taken place in an isolated fashion. They suggest that schools will need to develop more concrete strategies regarding parent involvement to experience more positive outcomes. Teachers and administrators will also need resources and opportunities if involvement becomes a priority.

McKenna, M. & Willms, D. 1998b. "The challenge facing parent councils in Canada" *Childhood Education* 74(6) pp. 378-82.

This article considers the challenges surrounding the issue of parents making meaningful contributions in school decision making. The unique Canadian context (no national government body responsible for education) and the historical participation of parents in school councils are highlighted. Attention is given to methods of expanding parents' current roles in school decision making, widening the constituency of involved parents and increasing parental influence in matters that directly affect children's learning.

McKenna, M. & Willms, D. 1998c. "Expanding Parental Involvement in Canadian Schools" *Policy Brief: Atlantic Centre for Policy Research*. University of New Brunswick.

This brief highlights the importance of expanding parents' involvement in schools. Parents' authority to make decisions on school matters, expansion of roles related to parent involvement and widening the constituency of involved parents are discussed.

National Indian Brotherhood/Assembly of First Nations. 1972. *Indian Control of Indian Education: Policy Paper presented to the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development*. Ottawa: Assembly of First Nations.

This document is a statement on education prepared for the Working Committee of the Negotiating Committee of the National Indian Brotherhood. It is designed to be used for future common action in the area of education and includes a statement of philosophy, goals, principles and directions that must form the foundation of any school program for First Nations children. It includes a section detailing the role of parents in setting goals of education (p. 3) as well as recommendations regarding parental/family and community participation in education.

Raham, H. 1997. "Struggling With School Accountability Issues" *Society for the Advancement of Excellence in Education*. Kelowna, British Columbia.

This article outlines possible policy options governments may consider regarding accountability issues related to school and system performance. The author highlights several accountability models that have been employed in various jurisdictions across Canada, the United States and in Britain.
Raham, H. 2002a. "School Planning Councils" *Society for the Advancement of Excellence in Education*. Kelowna, British Columbia.

This article examines the current state of school councils across Canada. It provides a summary of the current responsibilities, challenges, supports, and possible benefits school councils may provide.

Raham, H. 2002b. "The Changing Role of School Boards" *Society for the Advancement of Excellence in Education*. Kelowna, British Columbia.

This article highlights the challenges that systemic reforms to education present to existing school boards and provides suggestions regarding how boards may meet these challenges. The author suggests that to "leverage their ability to affect capacity for improvement", boards need to consider investing in board member training and support related to assessment literacy; redesigning teacher professional development so that it is job-embedded and related to school improvement goals; experimenting with extended day and extended year programs to support student success; connecting to community resources and, studying and sharing examples of best practice in school board governance.

Reed, P. & Selbee, L.K., "*Patterns of Citizen Participation and the Civic Core in Canada*" 2000. Statistics Canada.

This paper reports the results of an analysis of data from the 1997 National Survey of Giving, Volunteering and Participation in Canada. It examines the incidence and magnitude of participation in three main areas of civic engagement: giving, volunteering, and membership in community and charitable organizations. The authors suggest that in most of Canada, a small proportion of Canadians, the civic core, are very active in all three spheres and are responsible for the lion's share of effort in all three areas. Saskatchewan presents a bit of an anomaly in this regard. Its civic core is the largest in Canada, nearly double the national average at 38.6% of the population.

Voisin, S. 2003. *Secondary School Principals and School Councils: Practices and Perceptions*. Ph.D. diss., University of Toronto.

This research examined the practices and perceptions of fifteen secondary school Principals as they managed school advisory councils. Findings suggest that Principals usually treated school councils as potential sources of support and worked at developing an attitude of mutual support/legitimation by using political skills such as bargaining, communicating, deferral, and agenda management. Almost all Principals welcomed the opportunity for communication provided by school councils and would keep them if given a choice. Most indicated that the councils augmented their ability to deal with community critics and issues. Most also noted that the electoral requirements, structure and composition were too rigid and the resources to sustain councils were too few. All Principals believed that the school councils affected them in their work but had little effect on existing school culture or student achievement.

Wagner, K. 1997. "Trends in Public Education Governance – Canada" *Society for the Advancement of Excellence in Education*. Kelowna, British Columbia.

This article considers changes related to Canadian public education governance and the challenges these changes may present. Defining governance as "who holds decision-making authority and how that authority is administered", the author describes three initiatives related to current reform: the emergence of school councils, the consolidation of school boards and the integration of services. Wagner explains that challenges related to these initiatives coalesce around how to make bureaucratic structures, which are necessary to provide stability, more flexible. She suggests that to address challenges, strategies to monitor and measure outcomes need to be built into governance structures. Conducting more research (within a Canadian context) into the effectiveness of governance structures would also be worthwhile.

Wagner, K. 2004. "Local Decision Making" *Society for the Advancement of Excellence in Education*. Kelowna, British Columbia.

This article examines emerging trends and challenges local school boards across Canada experience due to reforms related to local education governance. Particularly highlighted are issues surrounding shared decision making and embedded accountability structures.

Willms, J.D. (Ed.) 2004. *Vulnerable Children: Findings from Canada's National Longitudinal Survey of Children and Youth*. Edmonton: The University of Alberta Press.

This text presents the results of a national longitudinal survey of Canadian children and youth. It identifies central issues to guide policy development and interventions to improve the health and well-being of Canadian children. Of particular interest to this discussion are the findings that suggest that vulnerable children and youth are found in all socio-economic levels of Canadian society and the positive effect supporting parents (particularly mothers) can have on improving outcomes for vulnerable children and youth.

Canadian Legislation and Supporting Documents Related to School Councils

Canadian Legislation

Alberta

Name: *School Council*

Make Up and Voting

School Councils will have a minimum of seven members at the elementary and junior high levels and nine at senior high. The actual number of council members will be determined by the school community.

The council will include:

- Principal;
- One teacher – elected by teachers;
- Parents – elected by parents at the establishment meeting;
- One student in a senior high school – elected by students at the school;
- One or more persons who have an interest in the school and are not parents – appointed by the parent advisory councils where in place; and,
- May elect parents of child enrolled in the Early Childhood program.

Only parents of children enrolled in the school or parents of the Early Childhood Services program at the school are entitled to vote on the election or on any matter raised at the meeting. The term of office for representatives on the School Council is determined at the time of election by parents in attendance at the meeting.

Roles and Responsibilities

The School Council must:

- Prepare an annual report setting out activities of the council;
- Include a financial report of money handled by the council; and,
- Include a copy of the minutes for each meeting held.

The School Council advisory role can include but is not limited to advising the board/Principal on:

- Student achievement;
- Budgeting;
- Facility use;
- Programs; and,
- Policies.

British Columbia

Name: *School Planning Council*

Make Up and Voting

- Principal;
- One teacher – elected by staff;
- Three parents – one elected annually by Parents' Advisory Council (PAC);
- One parent must be an officer of the PAC;
- Board may fill vacancies by appointment; and,
- In schools enrolling students in Grade 10, 11, or 12, one student is appointed by the Principal after consultation with students.

Employees are not eligible to serve on the School Planning Council (SPC). Voting is done at an annual meeting and by secret ballot. The term of office is one year.

Roles and Responsibilities

The board must consult with the SPC in regards to:

- The allocation of staff and resources in the school;
- Matters contained in the board's accountability contract relating to the school;
- Educational services and educational programs in the school; and,
- Approval of the school improvement plan.

The SPC must:

- Prepare and submit a school plan with respect to improving student achievement and other matters contained in the board's accountability contract with the school; and,
- Consult with the parents' advisory council during the preparation of the plan.

Manitoba

Name: *Advisory Council*

Make Up and Voting

After being called to attend an "establishment meeting" for the purpose of establishing an Advisory Council, parents and community members may decide to elect such a council or maintain a parent council. The parent council does not receive the duties assigned to an Advisory Council and a school community must decide to have one group, but not both.

The Advisory Council must consist of at least seven members.
At least two-thirds of the total number of members must be parents of children attending the school.

No more than one-third of the total number of members may be community members who are not parents of the school children.
Parents and community members may vote

Employees who fit within all criteria mentioned above may be Council members but their numbers must not exceed one third of the membership. Besides the parent membership, the Advisory Council will have:

- The Principal – non voting member;
- A teacher – selected by other teachers – non voting member; and,
- A senior student – selected by students.

Roles and Responsibilities

The Advisory Council may advise the Principal on:

- School policies;
- Departmental and locally developed curricula;
- Student discipline and behaviour management policies;
- Community access to school facilities;
- Fund-raising and participate in fund-raising activities;
- An annual budget for the school; and,
- Participate in developing an annual school plan

The Advisory Council may advise the board on:

- The process of hiring and assigning Principals; and,
- Participate in any review of the school.

The Advisory Council shall:

- Communicate with parents of children attending the school to properly represent their priorities; and,
- Establish a means to regularly be accountable to the school and community for activities.

New Brunswick

Name: *Parent School Support Committee*

Make Up and Voting

The Parent School Support Committee shall consist of:

- No fewer than six nor more than twelve members;
- A majority of members must be parents who are elected by parents ;
- One teacher – elected by peers;

- One senior student – elected by peers;
- One or two community members – appointed by members of the Parent School Support Committee;
- One parent appointed by a Home and School Association or Comite de parents if organized at a school;
- The Principal shall attend and participate; and
- A member of the District Education Council may attend

Roles and Responsibilities

The Parent School Support (PSS) Committee advises the Principal on:

- The establishment and monitoring of the school improvement plan;
- Strategies for ensuring the language and culture of the school reflects the community;
- The school mission;
- School policies related to education, language and culture;
- Communication between the school and families to encourage involvement;
- Strategies for community partnerships;
- Creating a positive school climate;
- Conditions leading to quality of learning and teaching; and,
- Improving school property and facilitating its use by community.

A Parent School Support Committee shall:

- Participate in the selection of the Principal and vice Principal;
- Review the results of the school performance report;
- If requested, evaluate the Principal's duties related to the PSS Committee; and,
- Communicate with the District Education Council with respect to duties of the Parent School Support Committee.

Newfoundland

Name: *School Council*

Make Up and Voting

A School Council shall consist of no fewer that eight nor more than fifteen members.

Make up for the School Council shall consist of:

- Two to four teachers – elected by staff;
- Three to six parents – elected by parents;
- Two to four community representatives – appointed by the School Council members;

- Principal of the school – may not serve as chairperson of the Council; and,
- One senior student – elected by peers.

Teachers are not allowed to be a Council member in the school where they teach. The term of office is three years and members may serve a second three-year term.

Roles and Responsibilities

The role of the School Council is to:

- Represent the educational interests of the school and advise on the quality of teaching and learning in the school;
- Facilitate parent and community involvement in teaching and learning in the school; and,
- Advise the board on matters of concern to the school and community.

The School Council shall:

- Approve for recommendation to the board, a plan for improving teaching and learning in the school;
- Support and promote the plan approved by the board;
- Approve and monitor activities for the raising of funds;
- Consider information respecting performance standards;
- Assist in the system of monitoring and evaluating standards;
- Monitor the implementation of recommendations in reports on the school performance; and,
- Conduct meetings with parents and community members with respect to its duties.

Nova Scotia

Name: *School Advisory Council*

Make Up and Voting

The School Advisory Council (SAC) shall consist of:

- No fewer than five nor more than eighteen members;
- At least one parent – elected by parents;
- At least two students from grades 7 to 12 – elected by peers;
- At least two students in elementary grades- elected by students;
- At least one teacher – elected by peers;
- At least one support staff – elected by peers;
- The Principal of the school (non voting);
- At least one community representative – elected by community or appointed by members of the SAC; and,

- No group may make up more than one-third of the School Advisory Council.
- School Board members may not be members of the School Advisory Council

Roles and Responsibilities

A School Advisory Council shall:

- After consultation with school staff, develop and recommend to the school board a school improvement plan;
- Prepare an annual report;
- Advise on the development of school policies that promote academic excellence and a positive learning environment;
- Advise the Principal and staff of the school on curriculum and programs, school practices, student discipline, fund-raising and parent-school communication and similar matters;
- Advise the school board on curriculum and programs, student-support services, policy development, funding, communication strategies and similar matters;
- Participate in the selection of the Principal; and,
- On approval of the school board, make by-laws respecting the operation of the SAC.

Ontario

Name: *School Council*

Make Up and Voting

The School Council must include:

- Parents – number may be specified by the school council bylaw if the school has an affiliation with a provincial association or specified by the board. *Parents must constitute a majority of members*;
- The Principal of the school (non voting);
- One teacher – (voting member) elected by teachers at the school;
- One student (secondary) – appointed by the student council or elected by students at the school. Elementary schools may have a student representative appointed by the Principal if requested by Council;
- One or two community representatives – appointed by members of the Council;
- Employees of the board and board members cannot be on the School Councils. An exception may occur when a staff member is appointed as a community representative and members of the School Council are informed prior to the appointment;

- Voting on parent representatives includes all parents of students in the school;
- Voting is done after notification of election; and,
- Term of office is one year.

Roles and Responsibilities

The board must consult with the School Council in regards to policies that relate to:

- Pupil achievement;
- Appropriate dress for pupils;
- Allocation of funds to Councils;
- Fund-raising activities of Councils;
- Conflict resolution processes for Councils;
- Reimbursement of expenses incurred by members of the School Council;
- The development of plans for education initiatives that relate to pupil achievement or to the accountability of the system to parents;
- Conduct of persons in schools;
- Board action plans for student improvement; and,
- Process and criteria for the selection of Principals and vice Principals.

School Councils may make recommendation to the school or board on any matter. School Councils duties include:

- Engaging in fund-raising as authorized by board policy;
- Consulting with parents about matters under consideration by Council; and,
- Submitting an annual report on activities to the board, Principal and every parent.

Prince Edward Island

Name: *School Council*

Make Up and Voting

Parents of students attending a school may make up a School Council. The membership of the Council must consist of:

- Majority (minimum of three) must be parents – elected by parents;
- Principal must be a member;
- Teacher representation is required; and,
- Student representation is subject to Council discretion.

Roles and Responsibilities

School Councils advise the Principal on:

- The school calendar, school opening and closing hours, noon hour policies, timing of exams and other events;
- Extracurricular activities and field trips;
- Student discipline and behaviour management;
- Fund-raising;
- Community access to school facilities;
- School-based services including social, health and nutrition services;
- Parent-school communication and parental access to information; and,
- Other matters that have an impact on the life or financial resources of the family or quality of life of the student.

The School Council is responsible for:

- Providing communication between the school and the community;
- Building awareness among parents of school programs, activities and issues;
- Advising the school board with respect to the development of the school improvement plan; and,
- Advising, where requested, with respect to the selection of a Principal for the school.

Quebec

Name: *Governing Board*

Make Up and Voting

A Governing Board has not more than twenty members comprised of the following:

- Four parents – elected by parents;
- Four school staff (may include two non-teaching staff – elected by peers;
- Two secondary school students-elected or appointed by peers;
- One childcare worker (if applicable at that school) – elected by peers;
- Two community representatives – appointed by Board members;
- The School Board determines the number of parent and staff representatives. Staff representatives must be equal to parent representatives;
- Principal – non voting member; and,
- Parent term of office is two years; all others are one-year terms.

Roles and Responsibilities

The Governing Board may advise the school on:

- Rules of conduct and safety measures;
- Implementation of school regulations;
- Time allocation for subjects;
- Enrichment and adaptation of curricula;
- Special activities such as field trips;
- Implementation of student and special education services;
- Use of non-teaching time; and,
- Extracurricular activities.

The Governing Board is responsible for:

- Adopting the school's annual budget proposed by the Principal and submitting it to the school board for approval;
- Approving the use of the facility;
- Approving and overseeing the implementation and periodically evaluating the school's education project; and
- Preparing and adopting an annual activity report for parents, community and board.

The School Board must consult with the Governing Board in regards to:

- School closure, change of program or building; and,
- The selection criteria for the appointment of the Principal.

Yukon Territories

Name: *School Committee*
School Council

A School Committee may opt to become School Council. A School Council may opt to become a School Board. Both are established as corporations by order of the Minister.

Make Up and Voting

School Committee

- The Minister establishes number of members and election procedures.

School Council

- The Minister specifies the number of members;
- Each Council shall have no fewer than three members and no more than seven;
- The Minister negotiates guaranteed representation for Aboriginal people on School Councils with each Yukon First Nation.

Number of representatives and selection process are also negotiated;
- All qualified electors are eligible to be nominated to run in election for School Council;
- A general election approximately every two years. Canadian citizens 18 years of age and over who have been resident in the attendance area for at least three months or parents of a child in attendance at a school in the education or attendance area.

Roles and Responsibilities

School Committee

- Advise the school administration on any matters related to the school and perform any function or duty referred to it by the Minister.

School Council

Shall

- Review, modify if necessary, and approve school objectives, education priorities and courses of study by grades, as prepared by the school administration, and other matters required for the effective functioning of the school;
- Make recommendations to the superintendent for the allocation of resources within the budget approved for the school; and,
- Participate in the selection procedures for persons to be interviewed for the position of Principal and select for appointment a Principal.

Supporting Documents

Alberta

Alberta School Act – Section 17

Legislation requires a school council to be established in every school operated by a board. The majority of the members of the council are to be parents of students enrolled in the school. The responsibilities of the school council are to advise the Principal and the school respecting any matter relating to the school. The board may delegate additional responsibilities.

Alberta Learning. 1999a. *School Councils: Next Steps*. Minister's Forums on School Councils: Final Report.

In 1998 the Alberta Minister of Education requested the formation of a Working Group to examine how well school councils were fulfilling their mandate. The Group was to report back to the Minister with findings and recommendations. This document represents the final report of that Working Group. The Working Group recommendations include the following: school councils should remain mandatory under the *School Act* and remain as advisory bodies; Alberta Learning should take action to ensure that school councils understand the areas an advisory role can include; Alberta Learning should ensure school councils are aware of information resources that are available to them; Alberta Learning, in partnership with school boards and other stakeholders, should ensure school council members receive training in certain specific areas; school boards should ensure school councils have meaningful input in the areas they choose to be involved; a Council of School Councils should be established; school councils should develop three year plans; Alberta Learning should develop a core list of knowledge skills and attributes for Principals working with school councils; Principal and teachers should become ex-officio(non-voting) members of school councils; and, the Minister should review the effectiveness of school councils every five years.

Alberta Education. 1999b. *School Councils Handbook: Meaningful Involvement for the School Community*.

This booklet describes the enabling provincial policy, intended membership, guidelines for operation, relationship to school boards, and guidelines for establishment of school councils in the Province of Alberta.

Alberta Learning. 2003a. *First Nations, Métis and Inuit Education Policy Framework: A Progress Report.*

This report is directed towards the Alberta public and highlights some of the Ministerial initiatives that are being undertaken towards improving Aboriginal learner success. Five specific goals, actions taken towards achieving these goals, and their relevance to the First Nations, Métis and Inuit Education (FNMI) Policy Framework are described. Parent and community involvement are included in some of the actions described.

Alberta Learning. 2003b. *Report of the Athabasca Tribal Council Schools Review*

This report of the Athabasca Tribal Council Schools Review Committee suggests strategies that may address the education concerns and goals of learners, parents and community members within Athabasca Tribal communities and the Northland School Division. Of particular interest to the Panel's work are what the Review Committee terms "push" factors or factors related to community or parental involvement that "motivate students to engage in learning and to stay in school" and the proposed strategies associated with these factors.

Alberta Learning. 2004c. *School Councils.*

This document describes the purpose, membership and responsibilities of school councils in the Province of Alberta. School Councils were established in 1995 to increase parent and community involvement in the education of children in Alberta. They are mandatory for all public schools, including charter schools. The make up of councils includes the following: the school Principal, teachers, parents of students enrolled in the school, community representatives (who do not have children attending the school), high school students. The Council serves in an advisory capacity to the Principal and board and Alberta Education, and facilitates communication between the local school community and the board.

Alberta Learning: 2004d. *Alberta School Council Effectiveness: Summary of Findings of Provincial Consultation.*

This report contains information on a study conducted into the effectiveness of school councils in Alberta. In the spring of 2004, a facilitator conducted eleven focus groups involving members of school councils and twenty-eight interviews with trustees and school Principals from schools participating in the focus groups to seek their opinion regarding the effectiveness of school councils. This report includes a description of the common themes arising from the focus groups and interviews as well as recommendations to improve school council's effectiveness, and effective strategies used by school councils that were involved in the study. Common themes from the consultations suggest that school council members are dedicated to supporting learning but do have concerns regarding their ability to provide effective representation of the voice of the school community. Councils are continuing to develop and evolve. Factors affecting the development of councils include, issues related to the leadership skills of the Principal and school council chairperson; issues related to building a relationship characterised by trust and respect between the Principal and school council; questions regarding whether the primary role of the council is one of fund-raising; and, questions related to the scope of the involvement of the school council in jurisdictional matters.

British Columbia

The School Amendment Act. 2002. Parents' Advisory Council, School Planning Councils, District Parent Advisory Council

Parent Advisory Council

Legislation allows for one Parent Advisory Council per school. Upon application from parents of children attending school to the board or Minister, a Parent Advisory Council may be formed. The purpose of the Parent Advisory Council is to advise the board and the Principal and staff of the school respecting any matter relating to school other than matters assigned to the School Planning Council, and at the request of the School Planning Council, to assist the School Planning Council in carrying out its functions. Members are elected to the council and all parents of students attending the school are eligible for election.

School Planning Council

Legislation states that a board must establish a School Planning Council for each school (except Provincial resource program). The School Planning Council consists of the Principal, one of the teachers (elected annually), three representatives of the parent advisory council (elected annually), if the school enrols students in grade 10, 11 or 12, one student appointed annually by the Principal after consultation with the student body. A board must consult with a School Planning Council regarding the allocation of staff and resources in the school, matters contained in the board's accountability contract relating to the school and educational services and programs in the school. By a date set by the board, all schools must submit an annual school plan to the board. It is the responsibility of the School Planning Council to submit a plan in respect of improving student achievement and other matters contained in the board's accountability contract related to the school. The School Planning Council must consult with the Parent Advisory Council while preparing the plan. The board may approve, approve with modification or reject the plan.

District Parent Advisory Council

A Parent Advisory Council may apply to the board for the establishment of a district parents' advisory council. Upon receipt of the application the board must establish a district parents' advisory council for the school district. The purpose of the council is to advise the board on any matter relating to school in the school district. Each parent advisory council in a school district may elect annually one of its members to be its representative on the district parents' advisory council.

British Columbia, 2004. *School Planning Councils.*

This document outlines the purpose, make up, relationship to board and parent advisory council, and responsibilities of the School Planning Council. School Planning Councils are advisory bodies made up of the school Principal, a teacher representative, three representatives from the parent advisor council and one student from grade 10, 11 or 12. They are responsible for preparing and submitting to the board a plan for the school in respect of improving student achievement and other matters contained in the board's accountability contract related to the school. They report to the board and consult with the parent advisory council. The role and responsibility of the Principal of the school and school board in relation to the School Planning Council as well as the important aspect of the school planning cycle are also outlined.

Society for the Advancement of Excellence in Education, 2004. *A Survey of School Planning Councils in British Columbia.*

This report provides a summary of the findings from a survey of School Planning Council members in British Columbia, as well as recommendations based on these findings. Survey questions covered governance, school plans, organizational structure, decision making, training, resources and support, successes and challenges.

Manitoba

The Education Administration Act: Advisory Councils for School Leadership.

The Manitoba Education Administration Act states that the school advisory council may advise the Principal of the school on school policies, activities and organization. Possible responsibilities include providing boards with recommendations regarding such things as the hiring and assigning of Principals and annual budget for the school. It is also the responsibility of the council to communicate with parents and community members so that it may properly represents their priorities and concerns to the board. The Principal of the school is responsible for facilitating the creation of the council.

Manitoba Education, Training and Youth. 1996. *School-based Planning: A Continuous Process for Effective Education. A Resource for Developing and Implementing Annual School Plans.*

This document is designed to support parents and community members in making contributions to the school planning process (a representative of the school advisory council is encouraged to be involved in the process). It outlines the purpose of school-based planning and the manner of developing and implementing an annual plan.

Manitoba Education, Training and Youth. 2002. *Parental Involvement: a bibliography.*

This bibliography includes print and video sources regarding parental involvement in schools from Manitoba, and across Canada and the United States.

New Brunswick

New Brunswick Education Act (1997): Governance – Section 32(1) – 36(9)

In 1997 changes were made to New Brunswick Education designed to create two bodies that were to act in an advisory capacity to schools: School Parent Advisory Committees and District Parent Advisory Councils and one body that was also to act in an advisory capacity but with some decision-making responsibilities, the Provincial Board of Education. School Parent Advisory Committees were to advise the Principal. District Parent Advisory Councils were to advise the superintendents (eight superintendents for eighteen districts). Provincial Boards of Education were to advise and work with the Minister of Education on matters that directly impact public schools. Specific advisory roles were established at each level (for example, School Parent Advisory Committees' advisory roles were decided at the school level, District Parent Advisory Councils' advisory roles were decided at the district level). Decision-making responsibilities regarding Provincial Boards of Education were made in conjunction with the Minister of Education. Funding: School Parent Advisory Committees receive $3.50/student and District Parent Advisory Councils receive $5,000/council. Provincial Boards of Education receive $150.00/diem for members.

This legislation was repealed in 2001, and legislation was passed that allowed for the creation of Parent School Support Committees and District Education Councils.

Parent School Support Committees

The composition of the Parent School Support Committee includes no fewer than six and no more than twelve members (a majority of whom are parents and are elected by parents), one teacher (elected by peers), one senior student (elected by peers), one or two community members (appointed by members of the Parent School Support Committee), and one parent appointed by a Home and School Association or Comite de parents (if organized at the school). The Principal of the school may attend and participate. A member of the District Education Council may attend.

The Parent School Support Committee advises the Principal in a number of areas such as the establishment and monitoring of the school improvement plan, the school mission, school policies related to education, language and culture, and conditions leading to quality of learning and teaching. The Parent School Support Committee also participates in selection of the Principal and Vice-Principal and reviews the results of the school performance report. If requested, the Committee may evaluate the Principal's duties related to the Parent School Support Committee. The Parent School Support Committee communicates with the District Education Council with respect to its duties.

District Education Council

District Education Councils are locally elected councils that operate at the district level. Their roles and responsibilities are similar to other school board structures in Canada. Each District Education Council has authority over the hiring and directing of the district superintendent; managing and control of school property; budgeting and expending money; making policy; operating schools; flexibility regarding local curriculum; placing students in classes, grades, programs, services and schools; facilitating the community use of schools; and, developing district education plans.

Legislative Assembly of New Brunswick. 2000. *Let's Discuss Public Education Governance: An Invitation to the People of New Brunswick*

This document briefly outlines the history of school governance in New Brunswick, including the amalgamation of forty-two school districts into eighteen in 1992. As part of restructuring, the government dissolved corporate school boards and replaced them with a three-tiered structure of governance, comprised of elected parents at the school level, district level and provincial level. A number of issues related to these structures led to the creation of the new framework. The new framework includes locally elected education councils, which will operate at the district level within the context of provincial standards. New Brunswick residents are encouraged to comment on the new framework, including possible responsibilities of District Education Councils (see Legislation Education Act 36.9)

Government of New Brunswick. 2003. *A Quality Learning Agenda: A Cornerstone of Greater Opportunity: New Brunswick's Prosperity Plan 2002 – 2012 Policy Statement on K-12.*

This policy statement outlines New Brunswick's ten-year plan for public education. It describes major changes that have occurred in the governance structure in the last ten years. In 1996, school boards were dissolved and replaced with parent advisory bodies (see Education Act 1997). In 2001, there was a return to public and community governance through publicly elected bodies. The role of Parent School Support Committees and District Education Councils, bodies created to give parents and communities a voice in education decision making within provincial parameters, is described.

Newfoundland

Newfoundland Schools Act, Section 25: School Councils, Section 26: Function of School Councils

The Newfoundland Schools Act, 1997 allows for the creation of school councils. Membership of the council is to consist of Principal, parent, teacher and community representatives, and a student representative if senior high school courses are taught at the school. The purpose of the council is "develop policies and practices which enhance the quality of school programs and the levels of student achievement". Section 25 of the Newfoundland Schools Act declares who must be included in the council, describes the manner in which they are included (elected or appointed) and their term of office. Section 26 of the Act describes the various functions of the school council.

Government of Newfoundland. 2004. *A Framework for School Development*

This document outlines a framework for "school development", which is the name the Government of Newfoundland has adopted to describe the concept of planned change that involves the building of learning communities to enhance student learning. While primarily focused on the role of teachers and learners in the change process, the "School Development Cycle" does include one phase, the Internal School Review, where parental/community members may be engaged to provide feedback. The Internal School Review involves monitoring all those factors that are linked to learning within the school. One of these factors is "school and community relationships". During this phase of the Cycle, teachers and Principals are encouraged to take an active leadership role in gathering and organizing data related to provincially established criteria and are encouraged to include all stakeholders in this process.

Northwest Territories

Northwest Territories Education Act, 1996

The Northwest Territories Education Act does not mandate the existence of Parent Advisory Councils but allows District Education Councils and District Education Authorities to establish committees as needed.

Nova Scotia

Nova Scotia Education Act: Section 20 - 23.

School boards are required to establish Councils upon request. Councils are make up is to include no fewer than five and no more than eighteen members. Composition is to include at least one parent, at least two students, at least one teacher, at least one support staff, the Principal of the school, and at least one community representative. No group may make up more than one-third of the Council. School Board members may not be on the Council. Most members join the Council through election. Some of the Councils duties include: after consultation with school staff, develop and recommend to the school board a school improvement plan; prepare an annual report; advise on the development of school policies that promote academic excellence; advise the Principal and the curriculum on school programs, practices, student discipline, and fund-raising; and, participate in the selection of the Principal.

Province of Nova Scotia. 2003. *Report on the School Advisory Councils Consultation.*

This report summarizes the findings of a consultation that took place with school boards, school advisory councils and parental representatives during the fall of 2002. It identifies five areas requiring improvement regarding School Advisory Councils. These include clarification of roles and responsibilities in certain areas (particularly the role of the School Advisory Council in school improvement planning and selection of the Principal); professional development and improved orientation support to enable School Advisory Council members to effectively carry out responsibilities; opportunities for School Advisory Councils to network with each other (particularly with families of schools); creation of closer working relationships between the School Advisory Council, their school board and the Department of Education; and, enhancement of parent-school communication to improve community awareness of the role, value and function of School Advisory Council within the school.

Ontario

Ontario Education Act, Ontario Regulation 612/00 "School Councils"

The Ontario Education Act states that through the active participation of parents, the purpose of school councils is to improve pupil achievement and to enhance the accountability of the education system to parents. The Act also states that the school council is an advisory body. The composition of a school council is defined (parents; Principal of the school; teacher representative; other school employee; if a secondary school, a student; community representative; member of Ontario Federation of Home and School Associations and Ontario Association of Parents in Catholic Education or Parent Partenaires en Education). All members other than the Principal and community representatives are elected by their peers. The Act indicates that boards shall solicit the view of the council on educational policy and guidelines, and new initiatives. The council may make recommendations to the Principal of the school on any matter. The council may engage in fund-raising activities in accordance with established policy. The council will consult with parents about matters under consideration by the council.

Government of Ontario. 2001. *School Councils: A Guide to Members*

This guide was developed as a resource for school council members. It explains the relationships of school councils to the Principal and school board and the roles and responsibilities of school councils. It also provides suggestions and templates to help school councils set goals and priorities and meet their responsibilities (one example of this is the sample "Principal profile" a school council might present to a board describing qualities and competencies the school council believes are important). In the introduction section of the document, a short history of the evolution of school councils in Ontario is provided. This history suggests that as the importance of parent/community involvement in schools became evident in the early 1990's, the government responded by introducing a policy on school councils. Throughout the 1990's and to present day, feedback from educational organizations and the public suggested that the roles and responsibilities of school councils needed to be defined more clearly. In 2000, regulations within the Education Act were introduced that outlined the purpose (an advisory body to improve student achievement and enhance the accountability of the education system to parents), and clarified roles and responsibilities of the council, school Principal and board.

Ministry of Education, Ontario. 2004. *Parent Voice in Education Project*.

This document outlines the parameters of the Parent Voice in Education Project, a project designed to determine the best way to establish a representative and independent province-wide parent organization that gives parents a stronger voice on education issues at the provincial level. The committee formed to undertake the Project was scheduled to report findings in late February 2005.

Prince Edward Island

Prince Edward Island School Act: Section 66 and 67.

Minister's Directive No. MD 99-04 School Councils, 1999. Government of Prince Edward Island, Department of Education.

Provision was initially provided in the Prince Edward Island School Act for the voluntary establishment of School Councils. The Act stipulates that these Councils are to be advisory in nature and provide a channel of communication between the school and the community. The membership of the council is to include the Principal of the school, a representative teacher, possibly a student and parents of students attending the school (with parents forming the majority). The Act was amended in 1999 to the effect that the Principal is now responsible for calling a meeting of parents with the purpose of establishing a school council. This meeting is to take place in the fall of the year (by October 15). The amendment also added a provision for mediation in instances where there is a dispute between parents of a school advisory body and the Principal with regard to the role of the advisory body or formation of the council.

Prince Edward Island Department of Education. 1999. *Handbook on School Councils.*

In light of the 1999 amendments made to the Prince Edward Island School Act this handbook provides further direction to those interested in the function and establishment of school councils. It is presented in a question and answer format. Responses include a description of the purpose of the council – to advise or provide recommendations or suggestions on school-related matters (recognizing that decision-making is to be left to the Principal of the school). The procedures that are to be followed in establishing a councils are also outlined, including the manner in which the formation meeting should be accomplished and the manner of reporting council activities to other parents.

Quebec

Quebec Education Act

The Quebec Education Act describes parental/community involvement in two sections, Division II – Governing Board and Division III – Parent Participation Organization.

Division II, Section 42 of the Act states that a Governing Board shall be established for each school. Type and number of members are described (parents, Principal, teacher and community representatives). Procedures regarding the formation of the Governing Board are outlined.

Parameters of the role of the Board are also provided (the Governing Board is advisory to the school board and provides information to the school parent community and general community regarding school activities).

Division III, Section 96 of the Act states that parents of children attending schools may meet to decide if they wish to form a Parent Participation Organization. They then determine its name, composition, operating rules and they elect members. The Act describes the purpose of the Parent Participation Organization: to encourage the collaboration of parents in developing, implementing and periodically evaluating the school's educational project and their participation in fostering success. It also states that the Parent Participation Organization may advise the parents' representatives on the governing board regarding any matter of concern.

Government of Quebec. 2000. *Strengthening Ties between Schools and Communities*

This document describes the findings of a discussion group that reviewed the issues related to forming ties between schools and communities. It is directed towards schools and community organizations who are interested in forming partnerships that will support student success by allowing students to experience "the world beyond school walls". It describes in detail two aspects of a successful partnership: common values and clearly defined guidelines, as well as the specific needs and objectives of partners (school staff, parents, students). It also provides organizational templates for school/community organizations to use when they enter into partnerships.

Yukon

Yukon Education Act

The Yukon Education Act allows for the creation of School Committees and School Councils. School Committees, which are largely advisory in nature, may petition the Minister to become a School Council. Although the Minister specifies the number of members of a School Council, membership limits are defined in legislation as no fewer than three members and no more than seven. The Minister negotiates with each Yukon First Nation for guaranteed representation for Aboriginal people on School Council. Selection process for First Nations members is also negotiated. All qualified electors are eligible to run and vote in school council elections. The term of office is two years. School Council dictated responsibilities are largely advisory in nature; however the Minister may extend these duties. School councils are incorporated bodies.

Government of Yukon, Department of Education. 2004. *School Councils*

This document describes the purpose, make up, relationships, responsibilities, and supports regarding School Councils. Councils review and approve school plans, participate in the hiring of the school's Principal, make recommendations on how the school's budget is spent, propose locally developed courses, advise on the school year, staffing needs, school renovations, school programming and school transportation. They provide advice and encourage involvement of parents and community. School boards have direct responsibility for the operation of schools (the Yukon has one school board that operates the territory's French First Language School, École Émilie-Tremblay). Membership is open to all Canadian citizens who have lived in the school attendance area for at least three months or parents of children attending the school. Council members are elected every two years by the parents of school students and by those living in the school's attendance area. There is guaranteed representation of First Nations on School Councils. The Department of Education supports School Councils by designating a senior official to serve as School Council liaison, providing training sessions for members who request them, as well as a training manual. School Councils are funded through contribution agreements and School Council members receive an honorarium of $500.00 per year for attending meetings.

Provincial Literature

Aboriginal Education Provincial Advisory Committee. 2000. *Action Plan 2000-2005*. Saskatchewan Education.

This report outlines the Aboriginal Education Provincial Advisory Committee's (AEPAC) seventeen recommendations for action regarding Aboriginal education in the province of Saskatchewan. The recommendations focus on four areas of change at the school level: Cultural Affirmation and School Climate, Shared Decision Making, Core Curriculum Actualization and Life Long Learning. Parental/family/community involvement is touched on in recommendations related to three of these areas (Cultural Affirmation and School Climate, Shared Decision Making and Life Long Learning). Specific indicators of progress to help determine progress regarding successful implementation of the recommendations are also included.

Aboriginal Education Provincial Advisory Committee. 2005. *The Learning Community in Aboriginal Education: 2005 -2007 Priorities Report*. Saskatchewan Learning.

This is an interim report of the AEPAC setting out priorities for 2004-2007. AEPAC notes that the original goals of their action plan are still held: Aboriginal young people complete grade 12 and post-secondary education, flourishing in all professions; and, Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students and young people are knowledgeable about Aboriginal peoples and their history. This report affirms the Action Plan 2000-2005 vision, principles and key areas of recommendation and establishes new priorities for 2005-2007. Of particular interest to this discussion are details regarding partnerships to improve student outcomes (Growth of Partnerships) and recommendations and suggested priorities regarding Shared Decision Making (p 16 -18).

Archer, J. & Derby, A.M. 1955. *The Story of a Province: A Junior History of Saskatchewan.* Canada: McClelland and Stewart Ltd.

This book was a project of the Provincial Jubilee Committee planning the Golden Jubilee Anniversary of the Province of Saskatchewan in 1955. It is an adaptation of the parent book, *Saskatchewan: The History of a Province* and was designed for school purposes. Of interest are brief sections that describe the organization of education, including a description of lands set aside for schools before Saskatchewan became a province (Monies from the sale of Sections 11 and 29 in each township were to be set aside to build an education fund - Dominion Lands Act of 1872); an 1844 ordinance permitting the organization of tax-supported public and separate schools; the creation of the first school district in 1884 (Moose Jaw School District No. 1); the role of the early (late 19th, early 20th century) school teacher as a leader of cultural affairs; the formation of a government department for the administration of education (*The Saskatchewan Act, 1901*); the role of the rural school house as centre of the community; the organization of the Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation (1934); and, the creation of larger school units in 1944 due to declining rural population.

Northern Lights School Division. 2004. *School Division Governance Model*

This document outlines the role of Trustees and Local Advisory Committees in the unique context of northern Saskatchewan and within the parameters set down in *The Education Act*.

Saskatchewan Association for Community Living. 2003. *Navigating the System: An Advocacy Handbook for Parents of Children with Intellectual Disabilities*.

Recognizing the important role that parents and families play in advocating for children with intellectual disabilities, this guide provides inspiration and knowledge for parents/guardians/families when working with school systems. Of special interest to this discussion is Chapter 3 that describes the current Saskatchewan context, including laws, policies, and supportive frameworks as well roles key individuals play.

Saskatchewan Association of School Councils. 2005. *Parent Partnerships in Education Governance: The SASC Perspective*.

This booklet provides an outline of the mandate of the Saskatchewan Association of School Councils (SASC) and the Association's approach to providing a framework of support for Saskatchewan parents at local, regional and provincial levels. It describes the current work of the SASC and outlines changes they believe should be made to *The Education Act*. Diagrams describing relationships and description of responsibilities of current school councils and a "Strategic Business Plan 2004 -2006" are included.

Saskatchewan Education. 1996. *Public Discussion Paper. Structuring Public Education for the New Century: Ensuring Quality Education for Saskatchewan Students.*

This is a discussion paper designed to encourage dialogue regarding the best ways educational stakeholders can work together to structure the education system for the future. Four options are outlined: maintaining the status quo, restructuring school divisions and putting mechanisms in place to enhance parent/community involvement in local schools, restructuring school divisions, enhancing parent/community involvement and developing regional partnerships and integrating K-12 education with some post- secondary programs and services.

Saskatchewan Education. 1996. *Structuring Public Education for the New Century: Summary of Public Discussions and Plans for the Future.*

This summary highlights key themes emerging from a public discussion paper (see *Structuring Public Education for the New Century: Ensuring Quality Education for Saskatchewan Students).* Examples of themes include improving the quality of education should be the focus of change, local involvement in decision making should be emphasized, and strong government leadership is needed to provide a systematic and planned approach to change.

Saskatchewan Education. 1997. *Public Discussion Paper. Involving Parents and Community in Schools: What is the Appropriate Support Structure and Role?*

This discussion paper, designed to encourage dialogue amongst parents, educators and community members, outlines a vision for introducing school-based structures for parent and community involvement and includes a description of the roles and responsibilities for such structure within schools.

Saskatchewan Education. 1999a. *Involving Parents and Community in Schools: Report and Future Plans*

This report highlights the twelve key themes that arose from a public discussion process (see *Public Discussion Paper: Involving Parents and Community in Schools: What is the Appropriate Support Structure and Role?).* Examples of the themes include: the differences in perspective of rural and urban residents, the desire of those queried to encourage more student and community involvement, and the importance of providing local training and in-service.

Saskatchewan Education. 1999b. *Parent and Community Partnerships in Education: Policy Framework*

This document outlines policy and guidelines, clarifies roles and responsibilities and provides a range of possible forms of involvement for parents and community in the school. The framework includes a "Continuum of Parent and Community Involvement and Partnerships" that illustrates the scope of possible involvement.

Saskatchewan Education. 2000a. *Saskatchewan Human Services: Working with Communities*

This booklet is designed to support human service providers, as well as government employees, community boards and staff, community workers and volunteers as they engage in community work. It includes three sections. "Working with Communities" outlines the guiding principles of community work and role of the human service provider. "Processes for Working with Communities" focuses on levels of public involvement and aspects of community development. "Strategies and Tools for Working with Communities" outlines various strategies and describes tools that may be helpful in encouraging public involvement, community development and interagency collaboration.

Saskatchewan Education. 2000b. *Strengthening Supports: Minister's Response to the Report of the Special Education Review Committee.*

This document is the report of the Special Education Review Committee (Directions for Diversity: Enhancing Supports to Children and Youth with Diverse Needs). It provides an outline of philosophy, policy and program directions and actions for strengthening and renewing the responsiveness of the provincial education system in addressing the requirements of students with exceptional and diverse needs. Of special interest to this discussion are sections highlighting the nature of shared responsibility and guidelines for effective practice.

Saskatchewan Human Rights Commission. 2004. *Aboriginal Educators Consultation Equity Program Review*

This review provides a summary of the perspectives of Aboriginal educators and parents expressed during a 2003 focus group on education equity hosted by the Saskatchewan Human Rights Commission. Especially highlighted is the role of stories in creating a context for Aboriginal involvement.

Saskatchewan Instructional Development & Research Unit (SIDRU). 2001. *School^{PLUS}: A Vision for Children and Youth: Toward a New School, Community and Human Service Partnership in Saskatchewan.*

This document describes the results of an extensive province-wide consultation on education in the context of a changing society. The recommendations regarding the future of education for children and youth are set in a conceptual environment called School^{PLUS}. The three important features of this environment, a community school philosophy for all schools, integrated services/partnerships and school-linked and school-based services, has important implications for parental/community involvement in schools.

Saskatchewan Learning. 2002a. *Working Together Toward School^{PLUS}: Parent and Community Partnerships in Education.*

This handbook, a companion piece to *Parent and Community Partnerships in Education: Policy Framework*, is designed for trustees, administrators, school staff and school level organizations interested in engaging in partnerships with parents and community members. It includes a section directed towards schools, providing specific suggestions regarding partnership activities for school staff, school level organizations, parents and families and outlining the responsibilities of Principals, teachers, parents and family, community members and organizations and school level organizations in developing and sustaining community level involvement and partnerships. A second section addresses the roles and responsibilities of boards of education and school division administration regarding developing and sustaining parent and community involvement and partnerships. A third section provides an extensive list of materials and resources, including Saskatchewan examples of school board policies designed to support partnerships with parents and community members.

Saskatchewan Learning. 2002b. *Children's Services Policy Framework*

This document is designed to provide school divisions with assistance in the development of policies, programs and services to support all students in achieving their full potential. It provides the basis for shared planning among boards of education, educators, students, families, communities and other human service providers and government departments. Of special interest to this discussion are Sections 1, 2, 4, 5, and 7 of Section V; Policy: Strategies for Change.

Saskatchewan Learning. 2003a. *Building Partnerships: First Nations and Métis Peoples and the Provincial Education System: Policy Framework for Saskatchewan's Prekindergarten to Grade 12 Education System.*

This policy framework outlines Saskatchewan Learning's commitment to promoting collaborative working relationships among the provincial education system and First Nations and Métis authorities and communities. It puts forward the vision, goals and principles for school divisions as they transform their working relationships and the governance of the existing system through partnerships.

Saskatchewan Learning. 2003b. *Effective Practices Framework.*

Part of the Strengthening Education Capacity Strategy and arising out of the Special Education Review (2000), the Effective Practices framework, a web document, provides six strands to guide school divisions as they strive to monitor and improve the learning environment. These strands include: Responsive Curriculum and Instruction; Assessment for Learning; Comprehensive Prevention and Early Intervention; Authentic Partnerships; and, Adaptive Leadership and Caring and Respectful School Environment. A visual representation of the framework depicts a set of concentric circles. The large outer-most circle is the collaborative planning and monitoring process; within this large circle are the six pieces of the effective practices framework. Inside this is a circle depicting community education and engagement and development. Inside this circle is the learning community. The inner circle depicts the intellectual, personal, social, physical and cultural/spiritual development of the whole child or youth. Information regarding each of the six strands, including suggestions and rubrics for assessing development of each practice, are available at the Saskatchewan Learning website.

Saskatchewan Learning. 2004. *Toward School^{PLUS}: Empowering High Schools as Communities of Learning and Support.*

This document provides a framework for all members of a School^{PLUS} learning community as they work together to transform high schools to better reflect current challenges and opportunities. Adapting the Effective Practices framework to reflect the high school context, it includes sections that describe strategies for youth, family and community engagement.

Saskatchewan Learning. 2004. *Building Communities of Hope: Effective Practices for Meeting the Diverse Learning Needs of Children and Youth, Community Schools Policy and Conceptual Framework.*

This publication outlines policy, vision, principles, and program direction for Community Schools and other schools that embrace the community school philosophy. It includes a section describing the composition, roles and responsibilities, operating principles, and guidelines for selection of a representative body, (the Community School Council) that reflects the socio-economic and cultural makeup of the community.

Saskatchewan Learning. 2005. *Processes and Partnerships: Rural Community Schools Implementation Guide.*

This is a concise guide for those involved in implementing rural Community Schools. It includes sections describing options for involving families, children and youth and community members and organizations in Community Schools.

Saskatchewan Legislative Assembly. 1904/1905. *Statistical Report of the Department of Education of the North-West Territories*. Regina: Government Printer.

This report provides a review of educational structures and monies spent on education in the North-West Territories for the year 1904-05. Included in the statistics are figures describing the number of school districts (758) in the territories of Assiniboia and Saskatchewan (later to become part of the Province of Saskatchewan).

School^{PLUS} Leadership Research Consortium. 2004. *Destination School^{PLUS}: A Leadership Guide for the School^{PLUS} Environment.*

This guide is designed to be used by individuals, groups and organizations interested in leadership development in a School^{PLUS} environment. It is the joint effort of the School^{PLUS} Leadership Research Consortium composed of representatives from the Saskatchewan School Boards Association; the Saskatchewan Professional Development Unit of the Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation; the Saskatchewan Educational Leadership Unit of the University of Saskatchewan; the Saskatchewan Instructional Development and Research Unit of the University of Regina and Saskatchewan Learning.

Saskatchewan Rivers School Division No. 119. 2004. *Advisory Groups and School^{PLUS}: A Presentation to the 2004 Saskatchewan School Boards Association Convention.*

This presentation describes the new format for parent and advisory group networking that the Saskatchewan Rivers School Division established in 2001. Highlights include a description of the composition the Parent Advisory Council (PAC), the Constitution of the Saskatchewan Rivers School Division Parent Advisory Council (PAC), the school division policy that outlines the parameters of the PAC's operation and a list of web resources for Parent and Community Advisory Groups.

Saskatchewan School Boards Association. n.d. *Public Engagement: Module 15*

This handbook is designed to provide a simple introduction to public engagement for school trustees. It includes sections on effective communication, advocacy, engagement of volunteers, decision-making roles of district boards and school advisory committees, engaging the public in dialogue regarding policy development, and working effectively with community organizations.

Saskatchewan School Boards Association. 1996. *New Directions for: School Governance.* Regina: Saskatchewan School Boards Association.

This report summarizes the results of a questionnaire and thirteen focused discussion meetings undertaken by the Association regarding preferences for school-level governance in Saskatchewan. Participants included representatives of Saskatchewan boards of education, conseils scolaires fransaskois, trustees and division boards, individuals from advisory committees and other interested community participants. Broad themes arising from the responses suggest that legislation regarding school advisory committees and district boards in rural areas needs to be rewritten to emphasize the importance of meaningful parent and community involvement; effective practices regarding such involvement need to be shared; roles and responsibilities of councils need to be clearly defined; and requirements for school councils need to be flexible. More specific themes are also highlighted in the area of purpose, responsibilities, make up and support. A list of issues requiring further clarification is also included.

Saskatchewan School Trustees Association. 1996. *School Councils: The Saskatchewan Vision*. SSTA Research Centre, Report #96-13.

This is the report of the School-Level Governance Working Group, charged with taking a critical look at school-level governance and developing a consensus view of what this concept may mean for Saskatchewan. The report reviews historical understandings regarding school councils and provides recommendations regarding their future evolution.

Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation. 1996. *Brief to the Minister on the Structure of Public Education.*

This brief articulates the response of the Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation to School Division Reorganization. Section 2.5 of the Brief details the Federation's position regarding parent and community involvement in schools, explaining that the preference of the Federation membership is for parent and community involvement in an advisory capacity.

Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation. 1997. *Brief to the Minister and the Department of Education on Involving Parents and Community in Schools.*

This brief was written in response to the public discussion paper, *Involving Parents and Community in Schools*. It highlights concerns raised by the Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation membership regarding the creation of school community councils and presents alternatives, including addressing the broader issue of negative attitudes and behaviours about volunteer involvement in schools within the larger culture by "building a culture of involvement".

Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation. 1998. *Educational Partnerships: Discussion Guide for Teachers*

This guide was designed as a professional development tool to familiarize teachers with the range and kinds of issues surrounding educational partnerships. It presents various types of school/community partnerships in a case study format and is designed to be used in a workshop format.

Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation. 2003. "Focus on Working with Parents and Volunteers", *The Professional Development Newsletter for Saskatchewan Teachers (PD News)*

This issue of "PD News" highlights issues surrounding working with parent volunteers and describes various print resources designed to address these issues.

Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation. 2004. Brief to the Minister on Restructuring School Divisions.

This brief presents concerns of the Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation (STF) regarding restructuring of Saskatchewan school divisions. The STF notes that restructuring will lead to the challenging task of reculturing school divisions. The Federation encourage the Minister to recognize the importance of involving teachers in the reculturing process in meaningful ways and notes that requests for representation should be made through the provincial organization or the local organization. They highlight the important role local associations play in the education system and suggest this role needs to be recognized. They encourage the Minister to consider providing support to local associations as engage in the restructuring/reculturing process.

Saskatchewan Health. 2004. "School^{PLUS}: The Health Perspective" Rosetown, Sask, West Central Forum on School^{PLUS}.

This Power Point presentation was offered at a School^{PLUS} forum in Rosetown, Saskatchewan. It provides an outline of the possible associations between current health initiatives and School^{PLUS}.

Specifically addressed are the similarities between the School^{PLUS} philosophy and the Action Plan for Saskatchewan Health Care, current Primary Care initiatives and the Provincial Population Health Promotion Strategy. Also highlighted are the ways in which School^{PLUS} is supported at the provincial and regional levels, including descriptions of regional initiatives that support School^{PLUS}. Challenges related to duplication of effort, communication, finances and expectations as well as common goals are touched on.

Curriculum Documents

Saskatchewan Learning. 2005. *Arts Education: A Curriculum Guide for the Elementary Level*. Page 9.

Arts and Education Partnerships. Implementing the School^{Plus} vision in each community will see artists and cultural organizations involved in school programs, bringing authenticity and relevance to curriculum objectives. School divisions and communities are encouraged to take steps to form local partnerships or Arts and Education Liaison Committees. Committee members might consist of representatives from the school board, the school division office, the schools, local artists, and dance, drama, music, and visual art organizations from the community. Committee members can work together to establish common goals and develop plans and strategies to support the classroom and total school arts education program. School-community partnerships can provide the essential communication link between arts-related programming in the community and school division. The committees can help develop planning processes to ensure that teachers, artists, and arts organizations are supported in their efforts to work together to help students achieve Arts Education curriculum objectives.

Saskatchewan Learning. 1998. *Health Education: A Curriculum Guide for the Middle Level*. Pages 4-6.

The aim of Health Education from kindergarten to grade 12 is to enable students to apply health knowledge in daily life in order to increase health-enhancing behaviours and decrease health-risking behaviours. Saskatchewan Learning continues to recommend a local liaison committee to support teachers and coordinate planning to positively influence the knowledge, attitudes, and behaviours of students. Through the involvement of home, school, and community, health instruction is co-ordinated with health services, within a healthy school and community environment. The curriculum document provides information about a Comprehensive School Health program and outlines strategies to coordinate a Health Education Liaison Committee.

Saskatchewan Learning. 1998 *Creative Writing 20* (March), *Communication Studies 20* (April), *Journalism Studies 20* (April), *Media Studies 20* (April).

These four English language arts courses help students refine their language skills and abilities beyond those developed in the required English language arts courses. In addition, each course provides the opportunity for students to explore an independent project or undertake an independent study that takes them into the community and workplace. Through the involvement with professionals, students learn work and career management skills and build relationships in the community.

Saskatchewan Learning. 2002. *Law 30: The Law and You. Curriculum Guide.*

"The Law 30 course is designed to assist students to become active, informed and productive citizens who know and understand their legal rights and responsibilities. Through the course, students develop an understanding of the concept of rule of law, and learn that the law reflects, and is shaped by, society's values and attitudes regarding social and human relationships." The Public Legal Education Association of Saskatchewan (PLEA) is a non-profit, non-governmental organization which exists to educate, inform and empower through law-related education. PLEA provides programs, services and free resources that support teachers and students in the K-12 school system.

Saskatchewan Education. 1999. *Social Studies: A Curriculum Guide for the Middle Level.*

"The purpose of kindergarten to grade 12 Social Studies is to help students know and appreciate the past, understand the present, influence the future and make connections between events and issues of the past, the present and the future." The Youth Heritage Fairs Program is a multi-media education initiative designed to increase awareness and interest in Canadian history. The program is aimed at students in grades 4 - 9. Students are encouraged to investigate a heritage event, person, or to seek out the living history that surrounds them. Students decide on the medium of their choice to communicate their story. The provincial Youth Heritage Fairs Association, which governs the program, is comprised of non-governmental organizations with an interest in culture and heritage.

Saskatchewan Learning. 2004. *Wellness 10: A Curriculum Guide for the Secondary Level*. Pages 289-308

Wellness 10 is an integrated health education/physical education course. The concept of wellness extends beyond personal wellness and requires investment in people and causes beyond oneself. In the unit entitled, *Support for Local and Global Wellness*, students are provided with opportunities to nurture a more profound sense of wellness by investing people and causes beyond themselves. Through the involvement of home, school, and community, partnerships are invited and formed as students make positive contributions to a community agency or organization.

Saskatchewan Learning. 2003. *Practical and Applied Arts Handbook.*

One aim of the Practical and Applied Arts (PAA) states students will "apply a variety of skills in context" that encourages educators to seek support beyond the school walls. The ten "Transition to Work Dimensions" common to all PAA curricula include community projects for locally initiated partnerships between students and local mentors (often service groups or seniors' centres). All PAA curricula contain objectives from the *Blueprint for Life/Work Designs*, providing a framework of career development competencies, such as "interact positively and effectively with others" and "locate and effectively use life/work information". The nearly 2,000 students enrolled in Career and Work Exploration every year depend on local businesses for their work placements.

Saskatchewan Education, Training and Employment.1994. *Multicultural Education and Heritage Language Education Policies*.

"Saskatchewan Learning supports the provision of opportunities for students to acquire, maintain, or regain languages, through in-school or out-of-school programming." Heritage language schools are organized and run by community cultural associations, and operate outside the regular school system. They provide learning opportunities in languages where numbers are too small to warrant an in-school program.

Saskatchewan Learning provides funding for these schools and professional development support for teachers in recognition of the service they provide the education system.

Ukrainian Language Programs - Bilingual and Core

Ukrainian language programs in Saskatchewan have a long-standing history of parental and community involvement. Parent committees work closely with school divisions to support in-school Ukrainian programming, while community representatives take responsibility for the organization and delivery of after-school programs. Parent associations are instrumental in providing classroom resources, extended support for language learning (through community concerts, seniors' home visits, an exchange program with Ukraine), arts education projects (such as pysanky or iconography workshops), community field trips (Ukrainian museums, historic sites, churches, festivals) and fund-raising campaigns. Non-governmental community organizations, such as the Ukrainian Canadian Congress – Saskatchewan Provincial Council, provide assistance with provincial initiatives such as Education Week Projects, parent conferences, guest speakers and resources.